Into the Unknown

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Into the Unknown

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Summary

In the unforgiving months of the Stalag camp, Bucky and Buck find rare moments of comfort and peace in each other's arms, their love for each other a lifeline during the war.

But their fragile refuge is shattered when General Klaus, a German officer, sets his eyes on Bucky and forcibly takes him away, leaving Buck behind.

Dragged into a world of torment and control, Bucky must summon every ounce of his strength to survive Klaus's sinister intentions. Can Buck find a way to break free and find Bucky?

Can Bucky hold on long enough for Buck to reach him, or will Klaus break him beyond repair? Join the heart-pounding journey of resilience, love, and the ultimate fight for freedom.

Updates every 3-5 days.

Chapter 1: The Midnight Call to Order



The darkness of the Stalag camp enveloped Bucky and Buck like a heavy blanket, their bodies pressing close together for warmth in the frigid barracks. The rhythmic hum of their shallow breaths was the only sound that dared to disrupt the stillness of the night.

Wrapped in each other's arms, they sought comfort in the small moments of stolen intimacy during the chaos that had become their lives for months now. The war had torn them from the skies and thrust them into this bleak existence, but in each other's embrace, they found a fleeting sense of peace and hope for something more.

Bucky's fingers traced lazy patterns on Buck's back, the familiar touch a balm to his frayed nerves. Buck held him tighter even in his sleep, as if fearing that even the darkness might steal Bucky away. Their shared silence was a reminder of exactly where they were. If they were to be caught in a precarious situation like this, it wouldn't end well for anyone.

Outside, the camp was a desolate, freezing wasteland of suffering, but here, in the fragile cocoon of each other's arms, they carved out a small sanctuary for the two of them. Each whispered breath, each gentle caress, and each stolen kiss was a defiant act of love and survival against the war that had tried to pull them apart.

The world outside might have been falling apart, but in this moment, wrapped in each other's arms, Bucky and Buck were whole. The night was long, and their future was uncertain, but together, they dared to hope for a dawn that might bring them freedom and a life beyond the barbed wire fences.

John groaned, stretching his stiff limbs before shuffling closer against Buck's chest, seeking comfort in his warmth. Buck, still half-asleep, instinctively slung his arm around John's waist, pulling him in closer and tucking his chin into the curve of his neck.

"You okay, Bucky?" He mumbled sleepily, his lips trailing soft kisses against John's neck.

John sighed contentedly, his body relaxing into Buck's embrace, finding comfort in the safety of their love amidst the harsh reality of their surroundings. "I'm scared, Buck. I don't want to lose this… and every goddamn day in this place feels like one step backward. I want us to get out of here. I want you to get out of here," John confessed, his voice tinged with vulnerability as he met Buck's gaze.

Buck's eyes softened, his hand coming up to stroke John's cheek gently. "If there's anyone who makes it out of this hellhole alive, then I'm betting on us, John. It's gonna be you and me, always."

John smiled softly, his hand finding its way to Buck's chest, feeling the steady rhythm of his heartbeat beneath his palm. "I thought you weren't a betting man," he teased, the tension easing from his shoulders as Buck's quiet laughter filled the air.

"I'll always bet on us," Buck replied, sealing his words with a tender kiss.

But their moment of tranquility was short-lived as the harsh sounds of boots and metal reverberated through the barracks, signalling the arrival of the Germans. Buck flinched beside John, his grip tightening protectively around Bucky as they exchanged worried glances in the meek light.

The cold contrast between their stolen moments of intimacy and the brutal reality of the camp weighed heavily on them. Each day was a battle, a struggle to hold onto hope and each other, and this was just a reminder of the precariousness of that. As the footsteps grew louder, John clung to Buck, drawing strength from his presence.

“We’ll get through this,” Buck whispered fiercely, his eyes blazing with determination. “Together.”

John nodded, pressing closer to Buck, his fear momentarily tempered by the unwavering certainty in Buck’s voice. No matter what horrors awaited them outside their fragile sanctuary, they would face them together, their love a beacon of hope in the unknown darkness.

With heavy hearts, they rose from their makeshift bed, donning their winter gear and steeling themselves for whatever awaited them outside. The air was thick with tension as the other prisoners stirred, their fear and confusion palpable.

With a silent nod, Bucky and Buck exchanged one last glance, their fingers intertwining in a wordless vow of strength before letting go. Together, they stepped out into the harsh air, wondering what all the commotion was about.

The barracks were a hive of activity as the prisoners hastily shuffled into formation, their movements sluggish in the snow from exhaustion, hunger, and fear. The air was frigid and unforgiving, biting at their skin and stealing what little warmth remained in their bodies as they joined the cluster of men.

John and Buck stood shoulder to shoulder, their hands discreetly brushing against each other, drawing strength from their connection as they braced themselves for the inevitable confrontation with their captors.

With a curt command, the German officers began to organise the prisoners, their voices slicing through the stillness of the night like a knife. John’s heart raced as he glanced around, searching for any sign of what was to come.

Suddenly, a harsh light pierced the darkness, illuminating the courtyard with blinding intensity. John squinted against the glare, his eyes adjusting slowly to the harsh flood of light.

As the Germans approached, their voices cutting through the silence, Bucky felt a surge of rebellion rise within him. With steely resolve, he squared his shoulders, his jaw set in determination, meeting the gaze of their captors head-on. He refused to look meek or show any weakness in front of the German assholes or his men.

Beside him, Buck mirrored his stance, his eyes blazing with fierce determination that sent a shiver down Bucky's spine. The Germans marched past them, their faces twisted in sneers, as they barked orders and herded the last of the prisoners into line.

As the count commenced, tension hung thick in the air, mingling with the fear and anxiety of the prisoners. But as the lineup began to take shape, Bucky's gaze fell upon an imposing figure standing in the sea of uniforms, a lone sentinel in the chaos.

It was a German General, judging from his uniform and air of authority and power. The man was tall and broad-shouldered, his presence alone enough to command attention and respect. His piercing blue eyes scanned the rows of prisoners with a cold, calculated gaze that seemed to see right through them. His jaw was square and strong, and his features were chiselled and intimidating, giving him an almost statuesque appearance.

The General's uniform was immaculate, adorned with medals that gleamed under the harsh lights. His posture was rigid, exuding an aura of power and complete control. As he moved, there was a fluidity and grace to his motions that belied his formidable strength.

Buck tensed beside Bucky, a silent exchange of apprehension passing between them as they braced themselves for the General's scrutiny.

They both knew this wasn't going to be an ordinary lineup. Not if there was a German General in their midst.

"Keep your head down, Bucky. Today's not the day we want to cause trouble," Buck whispered, and Bucky didn't disagree, giving a subtle nod of obedience and biting his lip and chewing it thoughtfully.

There was quiet murmuring among the soldiers as they all eyed the newcomer, their own apprehension evident.

“ENOUGH TALKING! General Von Klaus will speak!” A German soldier screamed, pointing his gun at the sea of men, who fell silent at the threat.

General Klaus stepped forward, his presence casting a long, ominous shadow over the gathered prisoners with the light at his back. His gaze swept over them, not lingering on anyone, his eyes full of contempt. The air seemed to grow colder under his scrutiny, the weight of his authority pressing down on them like an invisible hand.

“Men,” Klaus began, his voice a deep, resonant baritone that commanded attention. “You are here because you have defied the Reich. You are here because you are enemies of Germany. But make no mistake—your fate is now in my hands, and I don’t take kindly to those who disobey.”

His words hung in the air, a harsh reminder of the grim reality they faced under German rule. Bucky’s heart pounded in his chest, uncertainty gnawing at him. He cast a sidelong glance at Buck, drawing strength from his presence.

As Klaus's eyes dragged across the faces of the men in the lineup, his disgust was palpable. He moved slowly, deliberately, letting his gaze linger on each prisoner as if savouring their pain. The air seemed to grow colder under his scrutiny, and the power he held over those around him was obvious. His lips curled slightly in contempt, a faint sneer forming as he took in their ragged, defeated appearances.

But then his gaze landed on a young man in the middle of the lineup, and he paused. His eyes locked onto the boys with an unsettling intensity, freezing the moment in a terrible stillness. Klaus's expression shifted subtly, the sneer morphing into something like shock and then darker and more predatory. A deep, primal hunger seeped into his eyes, a twisted image of satisfaction at finding something he desired. It was as if he had found a rare, precious specimen in a sea of mediocrity.

He stared at the boy for what felt like an eternity, his gaze unwavering and predatory. The rest of the world seemed to fade away, leaving only the two of them locked in a silent, ominous confrontation. Klaus's eyes roved over the boy’s face and body, appraising him with a mix of curiosity and something darker. It was a look that promised nothing but pain and submission.

Finally, breaking the heavy silence, Klaus pointed directly at the

young boy, his voice cutting through the cold air like a blade. "You! Come up to the front," he ordered, flicking his fingers in a come-here motion. The command was laced with an expectation of immediate obedience, as if defying him was unthinkable.

Bucky froze, staring back at the General in disbelief. His mind raced, trying to comprehend why he was being singled out. His eyes flickered with rebellion and a stubborn refusal to comply, lighting up his features. He cast a glance at Buck, who had turned pale, his fear for Bucky evident. The silent communication between them was clear—this was bad, very bad.

Klaus's expression darkened at the boy's defiance. "I said, come up to the front," he repeated, his tone more menacing, his fingers curling in a tighter, more commanding gesture.

Bucky's heart pounded in his chest, but he remained rooted to the spot. The fire of rebellion burned brighter in his eyes, refusing to submit to the General's will. He wasn't going to make it easy for the bastard, he'd done nothing wrong. The defiance seemed to infuriate the General, whose eyes narrowed as his smirk faded.

The General moved towards Bucky with deliberate steps, the crowd parting before him like the Red Sea. The atmosphere was thick with tension, with every prisoner holding their breath, knowing the consequences of disobedience could be severe. When Klaus reached Bucky, he grabbed the young man by the jaw, forcing his head up to meet his gaze.

The General surveyed him with an unsettling intensity, his fingers digging into his skin. The proximity made the encounter even more terrifying, as Bucky could see the dark glint in Klaus's eyes up close. It was a look that promised torment and a cruel enjoyment of his power.

"What is your name?" Klaus demanded, his voice low and threatening, the grip on Bucky's jaw tightening painfully.

Bucky's eyes blazed with a rebellious fire, even as he struggled to speak through the hand squeezing his jaw. "John Egan," he mumbled, his voice muffled but defiant. "Rank and number: Major, 42-30233."

The General's grin widened, a predatory gleam in his eyes. He licked his teeth, savouring the moment. "John Egan," he repeated slowly, savouring each syllable. "You have spirit. I'll give you that. But I will take that from you too."

Bucky's glare intensified. "We'll see about that," he said quietly, his voice filled with a burning challenge.

Klaus remained unfazed, his expression impassive as he let go of his jaw, his fingers clamping around Bucky's arm like a vice. His touch was cold and firm, a grim promise of what was to come. The sinister satisfaction in his eyes made Bucky's blood run cold.

With dread settling in his chest, Bucky stole one last glance at Buck, a silent plea passing between them. He knew Buck was powerless to help without risking both their lives.

"I love you," Bucky mouthed, his voice a whisper lost in the night.

Turning back to face his captor, Bucky attempted to wrench his arm free, battling against the General's grip. His eyes blazed with a rebellious fire, refusing to show any fear.

The General's smile widened, an unsettling mix of amusement and malevolence. "You think you can disobey me?" he murmured, his voice a low, predatory growl. "I admire your spirit, boy. But it will be your undoing."

Bucky's defiance was met with brute force. The General's grip tightened, and with a swift, sharp blow to the temple, Bucky was sent reeling to the ground. Blood stained the pristine snow beneath him.

"No!" he faintly heard Buck scream through the ringing in his ears from the heavy blow.

Bucky felt hands seize him from under his armpits, dragging him away from the lineup. His struggles were futile against the relentless grip of the Germans. He thrashed, trying to gain purchase on the slick ground, his frustration boiling over.

"Let go of me! You bastards, let me go!" He shouted in panic, locking eyes with the startled soldiers as they dragged him towards a waiting truck, where the General now stood with a smirk.

The chaotic scene unfolded before Buck's eyes—his worst nightmare coming true. His heart hammered in his chest as he watched, torn between the urge to intervene and the fear of worsening the situation for Bucky.

Buck's voice rang out, raw with desperation. "Bucky!" he screamed, lunging forward and attempting to get to his boyfriend, only to be

restrained by Crank and Brady's strong hands.

Panic surged through Buck as he fought against the arms and hands restraining him, his mind consumed by fear for Bucky's safety.

The German soldiers tightened their grip on John, their faces contorted with anger as they dragged him further from Buck's reach.

John managed to twist in their grip and kicked out at one of them, catching him in the nose. The soldier reared back in pain, gripping his bleeding nose, before shouting and pointing his gun at Bucky's forehead as the other soldier grabbed his arms behind his back. The tension in the air was palpable, everyone's breath held in suspense as the scene unfolded.

But during the chaos, a commanding voice sliced through the clamor. "Stop! You pull that trigger, and you'll regret it."

It was the German General. His tone cut through the chaos with authority, halting the soldiers in their tracks. The soldiers paused, their hold on John loosening as the General approached, his gaze cold and calculating. Buck held his breath, awaiting the General's next move.

To his surprise, the General kneeled in front of John, his expression unreadable even in the chaos. The soldiers watched in silence, their faces a mixture of confusion and fear.

Klaus's eyes bore into John's with an unsettling intensity, a predatory gleam shining in the dim light. He reached out and gripped John's jaw, forcing him to look up and meet his gaze.

"You have spirit," Klaus said, his voice a low, dangerous growl. "But that spirit will be broken."

John's eyes blazed with defiance. "Don't touch me," he spat, his voice steady despite the terror gnawing at him.

The General's smile widened, and a sinister curl of his lips made Buck's blood run cold. "I admire your courage, boy," Klaus murmured, almost to himself. "But courage can be such a fragile thing."

Klaus released John's jaw and stood, towering over him. "Take him to the truck," he ordered the soldiers, his voice dripping with contempt. "We have much to discuss."

The soldiers hauled John to his feet, dragging him towards the waiting truck. John thrashed against their grip, his eyes locking onto Buck's one last time.

"Buck!" John shouted, his voice echoing through the courtyard. Buck's heart ached at the sound of Buck calling for him, his mind racing with a torrent of thoughts, each more horrifying than the last.

"John!" Buck cried out, desperation choking his voice as he reached out futilely towards his boyfriend, who was being pulled further from him.

Every fibre of Buck's being screamed for him to do something, anything, to stop them. The sight of Bucky being dragged away ignited an instinctive urge to fight, to protect, and to save the man he loved from whatever fate awaited him. But recklessness would do more harm than good. Any rash action could jeopardise not only Bucky's life but also his own and those around him.

The last thing he saw was the triumphant, predatory smile on General Klaus's face, a smile that promised nothing good as Bucky was thrown in the back of the truck, disappearing from sight.

Gritting his teeth, Buck forced himself to stay rooted to the spot. His fists clenched in impotent rage, and his muscles coiled with tension. The helplessness was a heavy weight on his chest, pressing down with an almost physical force. The harsh reality of their situation crashed into him like a tidal wave, threatening to pull him under.

With a silent vow, Buck promised himself—to fight, to persevere, and to do whatever it took to bring Bucky back. No matter the cost, no matter the peril, he would not rest until Bucky was safe in his arms once more.

As the truck rumbled to life and vanished into the darkness, taking Bucky with it, Buck stood in the cold courtyard, his eyes fixed on the spot where the truck had disappeared.

His heart felt like it was shattering. Each beat was a painful reminder of the other half of his heart gone in Bucky's absence. But beneath the agony, a fierce determination burned. He would tear down mountains and burn down cities if he had to bring Bucky back home.

Turning his gaze towards the heavens, Buck whispered a silent prayer, a plea for strength, for courage, and for guidance in the trials that lay ahead. He knew the path before him was fraught with danger and

uncertainty, but he also knew that he couldn't give up. Not now, not ever.

With every fibre of his being, he vowed to fight on and defy the odds. He would move heaven and earth to save Bucky, and nothing would stand in his way.

He would not falter. He would not fail. Bucky was his heart and his soul, and he would do whatever it took to bring him back. The fight was far from over, and Buck was ready for the battle ahead. He knew it wouldn't be easy. He knew the risks. But for Bucky, he would face it all.

The storm was coming, and Buck would meet it head-on, driven by a love that could not be broken.

Chapter 2: The Cold Embrace

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bucky was scared, despite his attempts to conceal it.

As soon as he was thrown into the back of the truck, they bound his hands behind his back and tied his feet together.

He couldn’t see where the General was. He assumed the man was in the front of the vehicle, but four soldiers with cruel eyes were watching him intently.

Their gaze made his stomach churn with unease and trepidation.

Licking his dry lips, Bucky glanced up at one of the soldiers warily. "Where are we going?" he risked asking, hoping for any answers.

The man snarled down at him, delivering a sharp kick to Bucky's ribs. He felt something crack under the force, gasping in pain and throwing his head back against the wooden bed of the truck, breathing heavily.

"Fucking fucker!" Bucky spat out, his breath shaky with pain.

The other soldiers chuckled sadistically, relishing in his suffering, before leaning back against the bench, watching him with cold indifference.

A whirlwind of thoughts raced through Bucky's mind as he struggled to maintain his composure. He tried so hard to be brave, but underneath the facade, he was terrified.

Terrified of what awaited him, but most of all, terrified of being separated from Buck.

The image of Buck's terrified face as he was thrown into the back of the truck haunted him. Despite knowing it wasn't his fault, Bucky couldn't shake the guilt gnawing at him.

Uncertain of how long the drive lasted, the bumpy truck eventually came to a halt. In a flurry of movement, Bucky was manhandled out of the truck and thrown onto the ground.

He sucked in a sharp breath as his injured head and ribs collided with the muddy snow, sending jolts of pain throughout his body.

Blinking, he tried to focus his vision, eventually settling on a pair of pristine black boots standing directly in front of his face.

Raising his gaze, Bucky locked eyes with the figure towering over him —General Klaus. The man's dark eyes bore into him, sending shivers down his spine.

"Get him up and take him inside," General Klaus commanded, his voice cold and authoritative, as Bucky's heart sank with dread.

Bucky struggled to get up, his body protesting with every movement. The soldiers yanked him to his feet, their grips rough and unforgiving.

He stumbled forward, his hands still bound behind his back, as they half-dragged him towards a looming building.

As they entered the structure, Bucky's heart sank at the sight of dimly lit corridors and echoing footsteps. This place was no doubt fortefied and wouldn't be easy to escape.

He was led into a small, stark room, devoid of any windows or comforts other than a chair in the middle of the room.

The soldiers pushed him roughly onto the chair, fixing his bound limbs to it securely, before standing guard at the door, their presence a constant reminder of his captivity.

Bucky shivered, the snow melting and slowly seeping into the layers of clothing that were fighting to keep him warm. And the blood from his head started to dry and crack on his cheek, making it itch slightly.

He didn’t know how long he sat there, eyeing the guards in agitation, until finally, the door to the small room swung open.

General Klaus approached him, his expression unreadable. Bucky tried to summon some rebellious facade, but fear clenched his throat, rendering him speechless.

The man circled him like a predator, assessing him with cold eyes. Now, Bucky was no small man, not by any means, but the man who stood before him made even Bucky feel small.

He had to be at least 6’6 and built like a brick shithouse.

Bucky couldn't shake the feeling of being completely powerless. He was at the mercy of this man, a man who held all the cards in this twisted game of cat and mouse.

He glared up at the man, attempting to look brave and rebellious, and he hoped he was succeeding.

"I won't tell you anything," he spat out, struggling against his restraints.

General Klaus's lips curled into a predatory smile as he watched Bucky struggle to maintain his composure. "You're even more beautiful up close," he remarked, his voice low and husky with desire. "A pity you've chosen to defy me."

Bucky's blood ran cold at the implication of the General's words. He had a feeling he knew what the man wanted from him, and the thought made bile rise in his throat. But he refused to give the General the satisfaction of seeing his resolve break.

Summoning every ounce of defiance he had left, Bucky squared his shoulders and met the General's gaze with a steely glare.

"I'll never submit to you," he spat, his voice trembling with suppressed rage.

General Klaus motioned for the guards to leave the room, and they followed the order immediately, filing out the door and letting it shut behind them.

Turning back around to the young man restrained on the chair, he took in the boy's appearance.

Dark curls stuck to his forehead, blood staining the right side of his face, fearful blue eyes clinging to false bravado, and full lips stark against the pale parlour of his skin.

He was beautiful. There was no doubt about that. A pretty little flower amongst the war.

General Klaus's smile widened, his eyes gleaming with a mix of amusement and arousal.

He moved forward and gripped the boy's jaw firmly, his thumb pushing with bruising force against his plump lips and tilting his head up towards him.

"We'll see about that, my dear boy," he said, his voice dripping with malice. "We have all the time in the world."

With that, John's face was released, and the General disappeared out of the door they came through.

Finally alone, John allowed himself a second to catch up with everything.

And with that, he let out a small, choked-out cry, not wanting to alert anyone who may be listening. His ribs were burning, each breath sending wave after wave of pain.

He was fucking terrified, and all he wanted was Buck. To be wrapped up in Buck's warm and safe embrace.

Not god knows how far away, tied to a stupid fucking chair, in stupid fucking Germany.

Bucky clenched his jaw, fighting back the overwhelming surge of panic that threatened to consume him. He couldn't afford to break down now, not when his survival depended on his strength and resilience.

Bucky struggled against the ropes binding him to the chair, his movements growing more desperate as each attempt to break free proved futile.

"God fucking damn it!" Bucky barked, growing frustrated.

The unforgiving restraints held firm, refusing to yield to his strength, leaving him trapped in the cruel grip of his captors with no way to defend himself.

As he fought against his restraints, Bucky's mind raced with a whirlwind of emotions. Fear, anger, and helplessness churned within him, threatening to overwhelm his senses.

He could feel the weight of his predicament pressing down on him like a suffocating blanket, the realisation of his vulnerability sinking in with each passing moment.

He had heard stories and seen the atrocities committed by the Germans, but now he was about to experience them firsthand.

Alone in the stark room, devoid of any comfort or solace, Bucky felt a

profound sense of isolation.

The dim light cast long shadows across the walls, amplifying the oppressive atmosphere that surrounded him making him feel smaller.

He longed for Buck's presence, for the reassurance of his love to chase away the darkness that threatened to make him disappear.

Closing his eyes, Bucky summoned the image of Buck's face in his mind's eye, seeking solace in the memory of their shared moments together.

Buck's warmth, his strength, and his unwavering determination were the pillars upon which Bucky had built his resilience, the guiding light in the darkest of times.

Buck. His rock. His anchor in the storm.

The thought of Buck back in the camp filled Bucky with a mixture of longing and despondence. He could only imagine the pain his absence must be causing Buck and the uncertainty gnawing at his heart.

If their situations were reversed, Bucky knew he would be consumed by worry for Gale's safety, his mind tormenting him with the endless possibilities of what fate may have befallen him.

With a heavy sigh, Bucky leant back against the chair, the cold metal biting into his skin. He couldn't afford to lose hope, not now. Buck needed him, and he refused to let fear and despair dictate his fate.

In the silence of the room, Bucky whispered Gale's name like a prayer, his voice a fragile thread of hope in the darkness.

He promised himself that no matter what horrors awaited him, he would cling to that hope with every fibre of his being.

Bucky's heart hammered in his chest like a relentless drumbeat as the heavy door creaked open, revealing the menacing silhouettes of three men. Two of them advanced with buckets, while the third held a gun steady and aimed directly at him.

The air crackled with tension, each heartbeat echoing in Bucky's ears like a drum.

His gaze flickered between the buckets and the soldier's firearm, his

thoughts a whirling.

Sweat beaded on his brow as he braced for the inevitable torment about to unfold before him.

When the buckets were placed before him, a fleeting sense of relief washed over him, only to be shattered by the glint of steel as the soldier produced a knife.

Panic surged through Bucky as he instinctively recoiled from the advancing soldier, his heart pounding in his ears.

With a swift motion, the soldier raised the knife, poised to strike, and Bucky braced himself for the impending agony.

But as the blade descended, Bucky's eyes squeezed shut, and his body tensed for the impact, yet nothing came.

Slowly, he dared to open his eyes, only to be met with the sickening sight of the soldier's twisted grin, his sadistic pleasure evident in every gleaming tooth.

The soldier chuckled sinisterly, the other men joining in, their laughter a chilling symphony of malice.

“Stupid American,” the man spat, his voice dripping with contempt. Bucky heaved in short breaths, his ribs protesting with each agonising gasp as he stared wide-eyed at the man, his eyes flicking back and forth from the knife.

The other soldier walked behind Bucky, his movements predatory as he ripped his head back, his hands harshly pulling at his hair. Bucky writhed in the chair, every muscle in his body screaming.

Whatever they were planning to do, he wasn’t going to make it easy for them.

The soldier with the knife backhanded him, splitting his lip. Bucky snarled, tasting the metallic tang of blood as he spat at the soldier, the crimson droplets landing squarely on his cheek.

Bucky threw a bloody smile towards the man, his rebellious attitude a blazing inferno amidst the anxiety pulling at his heart. But the soldier's rage burned hotter, his trembling hands betraying the depths of his fury.

“Ich sollte dir die Zunge herausschneiden!” The soldier screamed, his voice a venomous hiss, as he pointed the knife menacingly at Bucky’s face.

Bucky's heart raced as the soldier closed in on him, his every step a thunderous echo in the small room. With each passing moment, his desperation grew, his mind racing through futile escape plans, each one more desperate than the last.

'Maybe he shouldn't have provoked the man' he thought belatedly.

But a voice cut through the air just as the soldier loomed over him, ready to unleash his twisted fury.

“Tu es nicht. General Von Klaus will den Jungen. Und du hast bereits die Lippe seines Spielzeugs gespalten. Er wird nicht glücklich sein” The soldier at the door spoke calmly, his words a lifeline amidst the chaos.

The tension in the room was palpable. The soldier gritted his teeth and growled before nodding reluctantly, his fury momentarily subdued by the mention of a higher authority.

Without a word, the soldier seized Bucky's clothes, slicing away the fabric with ruthless efficiency, leaving only his boxers on. Bucky's skin prickled with vulnerability as he was exposed before his tormentors, his breath coming in ragged gasps.

“Hey! Hey, what are you doing!? Stop it!” Bucky cried out, his voice a desperate plea in the sea of brutality that threatened to engulf him. But his cries fell on deaf ears, his tormentors deaf and uncaring of his alarm.

The cold metal of the chair bit into his skin as he struggled against his restraints, but it was futile. He was at their mercy, a pawn in their cruel game, his fate hanging in the balance as they revelled in his suffering.
And then, with a cruel grin, the soldier lifted the buckets, icy water sloshing within.

Bucky's eyes widened in terror as he braced himself for the inevitable deluge, the icy water cascading over his naked body in a shockingly cold torrent.

He convulsed with the sudden cold, his breath stolen away by the frigid onslaught.

Every nerve screamed with agony as the icy water enveloped him, numbing his senses and stealing the warmth from his bones.

He'd take facing the flak over this bullshit.

As the icy water continued to assault his senses, Bucky fought against the overwhelming urge to panic. He clenched his jaw tightly, refusing to let the cold water break his resolve.

Despite the numbing sensation creeping through his body, he summoned every ounce of inner strength to withstand the torment.

The soldiers watched with twisted amusement as Bucky struggled against the freezing deluge, their laughter echoing cruelly off the damp walls.

Amidst the chaos, a flicker of defiance ignited within Bucky's chest. He refused to surrender to these bastards.

He wanted Buck. God, he wanted Buck. To just be able to see and hold him one more time.

Bucky summoned his remaining energy with a primal roar, pushing through the paralysing cold. His muscles strained against the restraints, and his mind was ablaze with determination. Inch by inch, he fought against the overwhelming tide, refusing to let them break his spirit.

Finally, with a surge of adrenaline-fueled strength, Bucky managed to break free from his bindings. He staggered to his feet, shaking violently from the cold, but his eyes burned with an unyielding fire, ready to burn everything in the room. He faced his tormentors head-on.

The soldiers recoiled in surprise at Bucky's sudden defiance, their smug expressions faltering momentarily. But before they could react, Bucky launched himself forward, channelling every ounce of rage and desperation into a single, savage blow.

His fist connected with the nearest soldier's jaw with a satisfying crunch, sending him sprawling to the ground. With lightning speed, Bucky lunged for the second soldier, his movements fueled by a primal instinct for survival.

A fierce struggle ensued as Bucky fought tooth and nail against his captors, each blow landing with ferocious intensity.

Despite the odds stacked against him, he refused to back down, his ribs aching with each punch thrown.

But just as victory seemed within reach, a sudden wave of dizziness washed over Bucky, his vision blurring at the edges.

The combination of exhaustion and hypothermia threatened to overwhelm him, his body betraying him at the worst possible moment.

With a final, desperate effort, Bucky launched himself at the remaining soldier, driven by sheer willpower alone. But before he could deliver the decisive blow, darkness consumed him, dragging him into unconsciousness.

The room fell silent, save for the sound of Bucky's laboured breaths and the distant echoes of the soldier yelling.

Chapter End Notes

Translation

“Ich sollte dir die Zunge herausschneiden!”
(I should cut out your tongue!)

“Tu es nicht. General Von Klaus will den Jungen. Und du hast bereits die Lippe seines Spielzeugs gespalten. Er wird nicht glücklich sein”

(Don't do it. General Von Klaus wants the boy. And you have already split the lip of his toy. He won't be happy)

Chapter 3: A Cruel Encounter

Chapter Notes

> Quick warning, this chapter's content has Graphic depictions of Rape/non con.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

As Buck walked through the door, the weight of his failure pressed down on him like a leaden cloak. The sight of Bucky's belongings on his small table and their bed exactly the way they had left it not long ago served as a stark reminder of who he had lost. Each item held a memory—a fragment of a life that now seemed impossibly distant.

His men watched him closely, their eyes filled with concern as they saw the pain etched on his face. They knew that there were no words that could ease his suffering, no gestures that could mend the shattered pieces of his heart.

But still, they stood by him, offering silent solidarity in his time of need. Together, they moved through the hut, giving him space, each step heavy with the weight of grief and regret.

As the hours passed, Buck found himself drawn to Bucky's belongings once again, unable to tear himself away from the memories they invoked. He ran his fingers over the familiar objects, each touch a bittersweet reminder. Bucky didn't keep much, but everything he had always held a deep meaning for his other half.

Then he found Bucky's favourite sweater, he picked it up with shaky hands and brought it to his face, breathing in the scent of Bucky deeply.

God, he missed him. He missed him so fucking much.

Suddenly, a surge of anger coursed through Buck's veins, a fiery rage born from the pain of loss and the frustration of failure. With a roar of grief, he turned around, sweeping his arm across the small dinner table, sending all the other guys belongings crashing to the ground in a cacophony of destruction.

His men looked on in shock as Buck unleashed his fury upon the hut, his fists pounding against the walls, his voice a thunderous roar that echoed through the empty space. Every blow was a release, a cathartic

purging of the emotions that threatened to consume him.

But even as he lashed out, a part of Buck knew that his anger was futile, a fleeting moment of release in the face of insurmountable grief. And yet, he couldn't stop himself. He couldn't contain the overwhelming tide of emotion that threatened to engulf him.

Finally, spent and exhausted, Buck sank to his knees amidst the wreckage of the hut, his chest heaving with exertion and Bucky's sweater clutched to his chest.

His men gathered around him, avoiding the wreckage and offering silent comfort as he struggled to regain control of his emotions.

In that moment of vulnerability, Buck realised that he wasn't going to just roll over as he gazed at Bucky's untouched belongings and bed.

He was getting his man back.

Bucky slowly regained consciousness, the world around him swirling into focus through a haze of disorientation. As awareness flooded back, he realised he was lying on a cold, damp floor, his body soaked and shivering uncontrollably. The frigid air cut through him like a knife, sending icy tendrils of pain coursing through his limbs.

Struggling to sit up, Bucky groaned as he pushed himself upright, his muscles protesting with every movement. His mind raced, piecing together the events that had led him to this moment. Memories of the struggle with the German soldiers in the cold, dimly lit room flooded back, each blow and every desperate attempt to fend off his attackers etched into his memory.

But now he was alone, left to fend for himself and lick his wounds. Before he could gather his bearings, the door creaked open, and the menacing figure of General Klaus loomed in the doorway.

With a cruel smirk, the man strode into the room, his presence casting a shadow over Bucky's weakened form. Without a word, he grabbed Bucky by the arm, hauling him roughly to his feet.

Bucky winced as pain flared through his battered body, his breath coming in ragged gasps as he struggled to keep up with the General's relentless pace. With each step, his legs threatened to give out beneath him, his weakened state betraying him at every turn.

"Fucking slow down, would ya" Bucky mumbled.

Finally, they reached another room, with the General throwing open the door with a force that sent Bucky stumbling forward. With a harsh shove, he sent Bucky sprawling onto the floor of an office, the worn carpet offering little comfort against his aching body.

As Bucky lay there, trembling, the General stood over him, his gaze calculating and full of desire.

“You put up a good fight,” General Von Klaus remarked, tutting at the boy.

"Yeah, the way your men fight is the reason you are losing the war." Bucky laughed lowly and slowly crawled backwards until his back hit the wall, his heart racing and uncomfortably aware of how he was only in his boxers.

Despite his best efforts to maintain his composure, Bucky was shaking. Whether it was from the cold or the fact that he was trapped in the room with the man and half naked, he didn’t know.

“I like the fiery ones and you. You burned so bright in that camp,” Klaus licked his lips.

With every inch of his being screaming at him to fight back, to run, to do anything, Bucky forced himself to remain still, his muscles tense with fear as he watched the general’s every move.

“Let me the fuck outta here!” Bucky finally yelled, breathing heavily.

The air in the room grew thick with tension, the silence broken only by the sound of Bucky’s ragged breaths.

Bucky's heart raced with terror as General Klaus approached him, his movements deliberate and predatory.

Bucky attempted to scramble away, but the man was faster, his grip like iron as he reached down and grabbed Bucky’s leg.

Bucky scrambled on the carpet, kicking out against the General, managing to break free.

He crawled across the floor as fast as he could, rising to his feet and making a run for the door.

Before he could reach the door, his hair was grabbed from behind and

pulled backwards.

“Stop it! Get the fuck off of me! Get off of me!” Bucky screamed out, fighting with what little strength he had left.

He flailed his arms, reaching up to try and untangle the hands in his hair, but the man was too strong.

“That’s it, fight me boy. Make me work for it” the General groaned in his ear.

Pain shot through Bucky's body as he collided with the hard surface of the door, and his breath was knocked from his lungs by the force of the impact.

He struggled against the General's hold, his attempts to break free met with only resistance as the man pinned him down with a cruel strength that left Bucky feeling utterly powerless.

“Please stop! Stop! Please!” Bucky cried out, tears slipping down his face, everything becoming too overwhelming.

The General trapped Bucky’s arms behind his back and manoeuvred him across the room and chest down on the large desk.

With a sickening realisation of what was to come, Bucky's heart sank, his mind reeling with horror.

He fought against the hold, his muscles straining with the effort, but it was futile. He was just too weak.

"What the fuck is wrong with you man!? Get the hell away from me!" Bucky snarled, writhing on the desk.

“Das ist es, amerikanischer Junge, du machst mich so verdammt hart! Du kämpfst so hübsch. Ich werde dich zum Schreien bringen” the General moaned.

Bucky bucked against the desk, roaring in anger and fear at being trapped like an animal.

Klaus held his hands in one hand and used the other to reach down and rip his boxers off.

“Please, god. Please no” Bucky begged. He was never a believer, but now he prayed to God. Prayed that this wasn’t going to happen.

As the General spread Bucky's legs apart, exposing him, a wave of revulsion washed over him, his skin crawling at the intimate violation of his body.

He closed his eyes, unable to bear the sight of the General looming over him, his mind consumed by a primal urge to escape, to fight.

Tears streamed down Bucky's face as he pleaded with the General, his voice raw.

But his cries only seemed to make matters worse as Klaus pressed his hardened length against Bucky.

The General grasped a fistful of hair and yanked Bucky's head up level with his body, smirking as he put his face right up close to the boys, licking up the blood and tears. "Köstliche Hure".

Bucky's heart hammered in his chest as he felt the weight of General Klaus's body pressing down on him, the sensation of the man's hardened length against him sending waves of revulsion coursing through his veins.

Every fibre of his being screamed for escape, for someone to help him. For Buck.

Oh god, Buck. What was Buck going to think of him now? Would he no longer want him? Was Bucky going to be dirty and used goods now?

But as the General pulled his head further back and into the man's chest, Bucky's spirit wilted beneath the weight of his tormentor's cruel smirk.

The taste of blood and tears on his lips only added to the sense of degradation, a bitter reminder of the agony he was about to endure.

With a sudden movement, the General slammed Bucky's head down onto the wood of the table. Bucky's vision swam as his body went slack.

"Can't have too much strength in you, boy." General Klaus grinned, unzipping his fly and pulling down his slacks to expose his aching erection, already leaking.

General Klaus reached down and dug his fingers into the muscle of the boy's hips and pulled his ass closer, rubbing his cock up over the tight

ring of muscle.

In the blink of an eye, he was using spit to lube up his cock, positioning it before forcefully slamming into Bucky.

Bucky let out a guttural scream. The searing pain felt akin to molten lava coursing through his body, causing Bucky to bite down on his inner cheek, spilling blood as every muscle tensed and his back arched.

It was as if he were being ripped apart from within as the man aggressively thrust into him, each movement driving deeper into his core with added intensity.

The desk rocked with the force of each thrust. Bucky's nails scrambled for any kind of purchase, but it was futile. Every nerve was screaming at him.

It was like he was on fire, burning from within.

General Klaus leant down over Bucky's trembling body to catch his own breath.

"Fuck, American, such a tight little cunt," he panted, smacking the underside of the brunette's thigh.

His consciousness was yanked back with every brutal thrust as the larger man built a rhythm and began to fuck into him over and over.

There seemed to be more lubrication now as Klau's cock slipped in and out with more ease. Bucky screwed his eyes shut tighter when his traitorous mind told him it was likely his own blood that was easing the way.

"This is not your first time, American. Someone has already claimed that honour. I wonder, is it that blonde boy who fought so much when I took you? Maybe I should bring him here to watch," the General groaned, snapping his hips and digging his fingers into the soft meat of the boy's cheeks, pulling them further apart to watch himself abuse the boy's deliciously battered hole.

At the mention of Buck, Bucky started to panic. He didn't want the General thinking of his beautiful Buck.

"Please, don't! Please leave him alone" Bucky begged, tears streaming down his face. Blood and drool were gathering on the table.

“Why shouldn’t I?” Klaus pushed, watching in satisfaction at the inner turmoil the boy was clearly going through.

“I’ll do an-anything you wa-want” Bucky choked out, struggling for air. His injured ribs were rearing their head amongst the already excruciating waves of pain.

With that, the General's thrusts somehow grew more savage and erratic. And to Bucky’s pure revulsion, he began hitting that sweet spot inside him.

His growing erection was purely from the physical stimulation of his prostate, certainly not due to any type of enjoyment on his part, but that didn't stop the shame and embarrassment washing through him at the knowledge that his own body was betraying him.

“My dirty whore likes a good fucking. He loves it when a real man shows him how to fuck. Doesn’t he?” Klaus moaned, grabbing Bucky’s throat and pulling him flush against his chest, sinking deeper inside.

When the boy remained silent, puffs of air spilt from his bruised, red lips. He squeezed his throat harder in warning.

With tears streaming down his face, Bucky realised what the General was asking for. Every fibre of his being was screaming at him. He’d never felt so dirty in his life as the words spilt from his mouth. He had to protect Buck. He couldn’t let this man near him.

“Y-y-es, I l..Lo-ve it” Bucky sobbed, feeling like throwing up as the words left his mouth. It wasn't his fault. He had to keep repeating himself in his head like a mantra.

It wasn't that he liked this, he just needed to keep Buck safe.

General Klaus’ grunts grew louder and more guttural as he fucked into Bucky’s ass relentlessly, ramming Bucky’s prostate, until he buried himself in deep for one final thrust spilling inside of him.

Bucky’s body betrayed him, and his orgasm shattered through his body, with a cry spilling over the desk and his stomach.

General Klaus pulled out sharply and pushed him back down on the desk, causing more pain to flash up Bucky’s spine like a burst of flames.

“Such a good boy,” Klaus groaned, slapping his bruised and battered

ass and pulling up his slacks after using a handkerchief to clean himself up.

Bucky stared at the other man with fiery hatred, but finally he had to look away and shut his eyes. Everything hurt, and he was so fucking tired.

“Don’t relax, boy. You’re not finished yet." Klaus chuckled, settling down in the chair in front of Bucky’s battered body.

Cracking an eye open Bucky blinked through blurry eyes.

“Clean up the mess you made,” Klaus ordered, arousal sparking in his eyes. He palmed his still-sensitive cock.

Slowly and carefully, Bucky weakly pushed himself up off the desk. Bucky's stomach churned with revulsion as he stared at the grotesque mess of his blood, spit, and cum on the table, his heart sinking with each passing second.

The mere thought of obeying General Klaus's repulsive command filled him with a sense of disgust.

But as he glanced up at the menacing figure of General Klaus, his resolve hardened. He couldn't allow himself to defy the General, for Buck’s sake.

With a steely resolve, Bucky pushed aside the overwhelming wave of nausea and forced himself to comply, though every fibre of his being rebelled against the degrading act.

Summoning every ounce of strength he had left, Bucky leant forward and tentatively licked at the foul mixture, his stomach churning with each nauseating taste.

Tears welled in his eyes as he fought to suppress the overwhelming urge to retch, his mind reeling with a sickening mixture of shame and self-loathing.

But even as he endured the humiliating ordeal, Bucky refused to let Klaus see his weakness. With a grim determination, he forced himself to continue, each agonising moment stretching into eternity as he struggled to maintain his composure.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, Bucky managed to clean up the mess to Klaus's satisfaction. Collapsing back onto the desk, he fought

to steady his ragged breaths, his body trembling with exhaustion and humiliation.

As Klaus watched him with a predatory gleam in his eyes, Bucky felt a surge of defiance welling up inside him. Despite the overwhelming despair that threatened to consume him, he refused to surrender to Klaus's twisted desires.

With a defiant glare, he met Klaus's gaze head-on, a silent promise of rebellion burning in his eyes.

Klaus grinned, seeing the fire still alive in his toy. Oh. Oh couldn't have picked more perfectly.

"Perfect, so perfect," he tutted, slapping his hands on his thighs, standing up, and moving closer. He trailed his hand through the boy's dark curls and down the length of his back before grabbing a handful of his ass.

"So much fun yet to be had," and with that, he let go, walking to the door and letting the two guards in.

The guards ignored the scene and immediately grabbed Bucky off the desk and dragged him out of the room.

Bucky was too weak and in too much pain to fight back, so he allowed himself to be dragged naked through the halls and thrown back into the small room.

A blanket was thrown down on the floor besides him, and once the door had slammed shut, he weakly pulled himself into the corner of the room and wrapped the blanket around his broken body before promptly passing out.

As Buck lay in his bunk, miles away from the harrowing events unfolding unbeknownst to him, exhaustion weighed heavy on his eyelids. The camp was eerily quiet, save for the occasional rustle of blankets from his men and the distant murmur of German soldiers' voices.

His thoughts were consumed by Bucky. He couldn't shake the image of his loves face, soaked in fear and desperation, as they were forcibly separated during the chaos the General had caused. The memory gnawed at him, filling him with a sense of guilt.

Closing his eyes, Buck tried to push aside the worry and fear that threatened to overwhelm him. He focused instead on memories of their time together and the laughter and love they shared for one another.

But as exhaustion finally caught up with him, his thoughts inevitably drifted back to Bucky. And the endless scenarios of what could be happening in his head.

With a heavy heart, Buck whispered a silent prayer for his safety, his mind clinging to the hope that they would be reunited soon. That the war would end and that Buck could finally give Bucky the life and love that he'd always deserved.

No more Marge, and no more reservations. Just them. Together. And safe in each other's arms.

As sleep claimed him, his last conscious thought was of Bucky's face, laughter crinkling the corners of his eyes, a blush caressing his cheeks, and that smile meant for him only.

And with that thought, Buck finally succumbed to exhaustion, his dreams leading him back into the arms of Bucky.

Chapter End Notes

> Comments are always appreciated, hope you guys are enjoying it so far! Xx
>
> Translation -
>
> “Das ist es, amerikanischer Junge, du machst mich so verdammt hart! Du kämpfst so hübsch. Ich werde dich zum Schreien bringen"
>
> “That's it American boy, you make me so fucking hard! You fight so pretty. I'll make you scream"

Chapter 4: Desperation's Toll

Chapter Notes

> I hope you're all finding some enjoyment amidst the chaos our boys are facing so far. Thanks to everyone for sharing your thoughts—I truly appreciate the feedback. Much love to you all xx

As the days stretched on with no clue of Bucky's whereabouts, Buck felt the weight of uncertainty taking its toll.

Each passing hour only deepened his sense of helplessness, growing more antsy with every minute ticking by and nothing to show for all the scouring of the maps and radio chatter.

It was like Bucky had just completely disappeared off the face of the earth. The Germans were usually boasting about their conquests over the radio, but this time, not one peep about anything.

The camp buzzed with activity—soldiers going about their duties. But for Buck, the world seemed to blur into a haze, his mind unable to focus on anything but the absence of Bucky by his side.

He'd do anything to just hear Bucky rambling about baseball or watch him tease and bicker with the boys of the 100th. But there was no life to the camp anymore; that had been ripped away from them all.

He prowled the perimeter of the camp like a caged animal, his steps quick and restless as he searched for any sign of weakness in the perimeter. Every face he passed seemed to blur together, none offering the reassurance he so desperately sought.

His heart ached with a gnawing sense of dread, with each moment without Bucky feeling like he was losing valuable time. He couldn't shake the feeling that something terrible had happened and that Bucky was out there somewhere, alone and in pain.

Buck's thoughts were a whirlwind of fear, each scenario more terrifying than the last. He imagined Bucky injured, cold, and alone in some remote corner of the enemy's territory, his cries for help going unheard.

Some naïve part of him believed that on the morning after Bucky had

been taken, he'd waltz back in through those gates and straight back into Buck's arms.

But the days stretched on, and still, there was no sign of Bucky. Each passing hour felt like an eternity, with the weight of the situation pressing down on him.

He'd heard the whispers through the camp that it was only a matter of time until he lost it. Because there was no Gale 'Buck' Cleven without his John 'Bucky' Egan, and vice versa.

The worst part was that he knew they were right. He couldn't do this without Bucky by his side, and he was slowly unravelling at the seams. Buck felt like a ship adrift in a stormy sea, tossed about by waves of grief and the not knowing.

Without Bucky to anchor him, he was lost, adrift in a world that seemed colder and darker with each passing day. Every moment without Bucky felt like a gaping hole in his chest, a constant ache that refused to be ignored.

He tried to fill the void with distractions—tasks to keep his mind occupied, conversations with his fellow pilots to keep up appearances—but nothing could ease the gnawing emptiness inside him.

He longed for the comfort of Bucky's presence and the reassuring strength of his embrace. But no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't shake the feeling that Bucky was slipping further and further away from him with each day that passed.

The fear of losing Bucky consumed him, threatening to swallow him whole. He couldn't bear the thought of facing the future without him. And he couldn't imagine a world where Bucky wasn't by his side. He refused.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting long shadows across the camp, Buck found himself standing alone on the perimeter, his gaze fixed on the dark landscape beyond. The night air was cold against his skin, a stark reminder of the harsh reality they were all in.

Looking up at the starry sky, Buck closed his eyes, the wind brushing its invisible fingers through his hair like a gentle caress.

He thought back to those words Bucky had said so long ago, a bittersweet memory that filled him with a sense of longing.

“You know, if this whole thing ended, And there were only two pilots left up in the air. It’d be me, and it’d be you, Buck,” Bucky had proclaimed.

With a fierce ache burning in his chest, Buck clenched his fists, his jaw set. He wouldn't rest until he had answers. Until he knew for certain what had become of Bucky.

Nights were the hardest for Buck lately, with the empty side of their bed amplifying his fears and leaving him feeling utterly alone in the world. He would lie awake for hours, staring up at the ceiling of his barracks, his mind consumed by memories of Bucky’s laughter and the warmth of his presence in his arms.

Turning around, he left the fence and walked back towards their shared hut, mindful of their curfew.

Once inside, Buck sat down at the table and pulled out the map from the hidden compartment and his radio.

Sensing their Major wasn’t going to rip apart everything in sight, they all carefully slipped from their beds and settled down around him.

The night stretched on, the only sound in the hut being the soft crackle of the radio and the occasional rustle of paper as Buck meticulously studied the map.

Buck sat at the table, bathed in the dim glow of the oil lamp. He felt the weight of determination settle over him like a heavy cloak. With precision, he unfurled the map, its creases worn from countless uses.

His fingers traced the familiar contours of the terrain, searching for any clue—any hint that might lead him to Bucky.

"The last we heard from the comms, the bastard moved through here," Buck muttered, his voice laced with frustration and a hint of desperation, tapping a spot on the map. "If he's still out there, we have to find him."

The other soldiers, sensing the weight of Buck's words, moved silently around him, their solidarity a silent testament to their shared mission.

They understood, without needing to exchange a single word, the depth of Buck's anguish and the fierce loyalty that tethered him to their friend. Each of them bore the burden of determination mirrored in Buck's eyes.

"We're with you, Buck," Brady said softly, his voice a gentle reassurance as he placed a comforting hand on Buck's shoulder.

Buck wiped a tear from his eye, the weight of worry and fear evident in his trembling hands.

"I can't lose him, not like this," he choked out, his voice breaking with emotion.

"We won't lose him, Buck. Not on our watch," Crank declared firmly, his voice echoing the shared resolve of the group.

Brady stepped closer, noticing Buck's tears. "We understand, Buck. But we have to stay focused. We'll find him," he said softly, offering both reassurance and strength.

Buck nodded, his gratitude for the men in the room palpable. "Thanks, boys. We have to bring him home."

The crackle of the radio disrupted the stillness of the night, its static-filled transmissions a harsh reminder of the uncertainty lurking beyond their immediate surroundings.

Buck listened intently, his heart pounding with each fleeting moment, hoping for a shred of information that might lead them to Bucky. Yet the airwaves remained eerily silent, denying them any clue of his other half's whereabouts.

Tension hung thick in the air as each passing minute felt like an eternity. Buck's chest tightened with every beat of his heart, each second without news of Bucky driving him further into despair.

A few hours had passed, and the night air hung heavy with anticipation as Buck and his comrades huddled around the crackling radio, their hearts pounding with a mix of hope and fear.

Buck's fingers trembled as he adjusted the makeshift radio, his breath catching in his throat with each crackle of static, praying for a sign—any sign—of Bucky's whereabouts.

Then, amidst the haze of static, a snippet of conversation pierced through, spoken in German. Buck's heart lurched as he turned to Brady, who translated the words for them as they came through, each word striking them like a physical blow.

"General Von Klaus wants all records of the American pilot erased. He doesn't want any trace that John Egan was ever in this camp," Brady relayed, his voice heavy with the weight of the revelation.

Buck felt as if the ground had dropped out from beneath him, leaving him suspended in a void of despair. The breath caught in his throat, and he struggled to contain the rising tide of emotion threatening to overwhelm him.

Bucky, the love of his life, his everything, was being erased, his very existence threatened by their merciless enemy.

The gravity of the situation sank in as Buck exchanged a glance with his comrades, their eyes wide with shock and disbelief. They were no closer to finding Bucky, only to learn that the enemy was actively working to erase any trace of him from existence.

"We must ensure that the American pilot remains a ghost," another voice added coldly, the words chilling Buck to the core. "If anyone asks, he was never there. Understand?"

Images of Bucky flashed before Buck's eyes—his warm smile, his playful banter, the gentle touch of his hand, and the warm press of his lips. Each memory was like a dagger to Buck's heart, a painful reminder of what was at stake.

"He can't just disappear... Not like this," Buck thought, his breath catching in his throat as the reality of the situation sank in. The thought of losing Bucky and never seeing him again was almost too much to bear.

"What does General Von Klaus want with the American anyway?" One of the Germans questioned, his tone laced with curiosity.

"It's not our place to ask questions," came the stern reply. "We follow orders, no matter how distasteful. General Von Klaus wants this done. We do as he commands."

With each word spoken, Bucky's chances of survival grew slimmer, and their window of opportunity to rescue him grew smaller.

The confirmation of their worst fears sent a shiver down Buck's spine, the weight of their enemy's intentions pressing down on him like a suffocating blanket. It was a stark reminder of the ruthless efficiency of their adversaries and their determination to eliminate any trace of Bucky's existence with cold, calculated precision.

Meanwhile, the urgency of the Germans orders spurred Buck into action.

With a determined grimace, he turned to his comrades, his voice tight with urgency. "We need to move now. Grab everything that belonged to Bucky—every last trace of him. We can't let them erase him without a fight."

His comrades nodded in grim understanding, their faces set in determined masks as they scrambled to obey Buck's orders. Together, they raced against time, frantically gathering Bucky's belongings and stashing them away, hidden from prying eyes.

With each precious item they salvaged—a worn photograph of Buck and Bucky, a dog-eared baseball book, and his little trinkets he'd found—Buck felt a surge of defiance coursing through him. They may have been outnumbered and outgunned, but they would not let Bucky be forgotten. Not today, not ever.

Buck moved with frantic determination, his hands shaking as he gathered Bucky's possessions. Each item was a piece of their shared history, a connection to the love he refused to lose.

He couldn't bear the thought of letting go of anything else related to Bucky, not when every memory was a lifeline in the darkness closing in around them.

With the last of Bucky's belongings stowed away in secrecy, hidden from prying eyes, and tucked beneath the floorboards of their barracks, a heavy silence descended upon the room.

The dim light cast long shadows, concealing the traces of their clandestine operation.

Buck surveyed the room, his gaze lingering on the empty bunk that once held the essence of Bucky. It was a hollow space now, stripped bare of the warmth and familiarity that Bucky had brought to it.

"We need to make it look like nothing's changed." Buck's voice broke the silence, his words a sombre reminder of the precarious situation they found themselves in.

His comrades nodded in silent agreement, their expressions solemn as they set to work. With precision, they arranged fake belongings—a spare uniform, a few books, a small leather ball—on Bucky's bunk, meticulously recreating the semblance of normalcy.

The sound of their footsteps echoed softly against the wooden floorboards as they moved about the room, their movements purposeful yet tinged with an air of heartache.

As they worked, memories of Bucky lingered in the air, each item they touched evoking a flood of emotions. But there was no time for sentimentality, no room for the ache that threatened to consume them.

Together, they forged a facade of normalcy, a thin veil to conceal the truth of Bucky's absence. It was a small act of defiance against the forces that sought to erase him, a silent declaration that he would not be forgotten.

After meticulously concealing their maps and radio, the group retreated to their bunks, feigning sleep as a facade against the impending intrusion.

Buck's eyes flickered with a mixture of exhaustion and tension as he lay still, his mind racing with thoughts of Bucky and the perilous situation they found themselves in.

Suddenly, the tranquillity of the barracks was shattered by the thunderous clamour of heavy footsteps.

The door burst open, and a squad of German soldiers barged in, their presence casting a chilling pall over the room.

Buck's heart clenched as he watched the soldiers systematically bag the staged belongings from Bucky's bunk.

His eyes widened in horror as he realised he had missed one crucial item—the beloved necklace that Bucky always wore, the one Buck had given to him before he'd left for war, leaving Buck behind. Bucky had put it in his pillowcase the night before it was taken because the clasp had finally given way.

With a surge of panic, Buck leapt from his bunk, his voice sharp with urgency. "Wait! You can't take that," he exclaimed, pointing at the necklace now nestled in the soldier's hand.

The soldiers turned to him, their faces contorting with disdain at his audacity. "And why not?" one of them sneered, his grip tightening on the sack of belongings.

"That necklace belongs to my friend," Buck protested, his voice tinged with desperation. "Please, you have to let me keep it."

But the soldiers paid no heed to his pleas. Their indifference was a stark reminder of the vast power imbalance that loomed over them.

As Buck lunged forward, desperation fueling his actions, one of the German soldiers stepped menacingly in front of him, blocking his path with a cold, unyielding stare.

Buck's anger flared into action, and he lunged forward, his hands reaching out to grab hold of the soldier's arm who was holding Bucky's necklace.

"Give it back!" he shouted, his voice echoing through the room with a ferocity that belied his desperation.

The soldier recoiled, his eyes flashing with fury. "Touch me again, and I'll kill you where you stand," he snarled, his hand moving to his sidearm with chilling intent.

But Buck refused to back down, his resolve unyielding in the face of such blatant injustice.

"You'll have to kill me first," he declared, his voice trembling with defiance as he stared down the barrel of the soldier's gun.

"You dare defy us, American?" The soldier growled, his hand instinctively reaching for the firearm holstered at his side. "You will regret this insolence."

But Buck refused to back down, his eyes blazing with defiance as he squared off against the imposing figure before him. "I won't let you take that necklace," he spat, his voice trembling with a mix of anger and fear.

The soldier's lip curled into a sneer, his grip tightening on the weapon as he loomed over Buck with a menacing air.

"Then you leave us no choice," he snarled, his voice dripping with malice. "If you won't comply willingly, we'll make you."

With lightning speed, the soldier raised his pistol, levelling it at Buck's chest with deadly intent. The air in the barracks crackled with tension as the other soldiers watched in stunned silence, their eyes wide with apprehension.

Buck's heart pounded in his chest, adrenaline coursing through his veins as he stared down at the barrel of the gun. But even in the face of imminent danger, he refused to yield, his resolve unwavering in the face of adversity.

"Stop!" came a frantic shout from Demarco, his voice filled with desperation. "Don't do it, Buck! It's not worth it!"

The words pierced through the haze of anger clouding Buck's mind, snapping him back to reality with a jolt. He glanced around the room, meeting the terrified gazes of his fellow soldiers, each pleading silently for him to stand down.

With a heavy heart, Buck slowly lowered his gaze, his hands trembling at his sides as he took a step back from the soldier. It was a bitter pill to swallow, the taste of defeat bitter on his tongue as he watched helplessly while the soldier scooped up the necklace and stuffed it into the sack with the rest of Bucky's belongings.

As the soldiers turned to leave, Buck's fists clenched in frustration, his knuckles white with tension. He had failed Bucky once again, and his inability to protect even the smallest memento of their shared past dealt a crushing blow to his already battered spirit.

As the Germans filed out of the barracks, Buck's legs gave way beneath him, and he collapsed to his knees, the weight of his emotions crashing down like a tidal wave. Uncontrollable sobs wracked his body, each breath a struggle against the overwhelming despair that threatened to consume him.

His comrades rushed to his side, their hands reaching out to offer what little comfort they could amidst the turmoil. They gathered around him, their presence a silent testament to the bond that held them together in the face of adversity.

"It's alright, Buck. We're here for you," Crank murmured, his voice filled with genuine concern.

"We'll get through this together," Demarco added, his words a soothing balm against the raw edges of Buck's shattered spirit.

Amidst Buck's heart-wrenching cries, his anguish spilt forth in broken fragments of words, each one laden with pain that cut deeper than any blade.

"I failed him... I failed Bucky," he choked out between sobs, his voice

cracking with the weight of his grief. "I couldn't even protect his necklace..."

The words hung heavy in the air, a stark reminder of Buck's profound sense of loss and guilt. His comrades listened in sombre silence, their own hearts aching with empathy for their friend's anguish.

"We know, Buck. But it's not your fault," Brady said softly, his voice filled with compassion. "You did everything you could."

Glenn reached out, gently placing a hand on Buck's shoulder. "We'll find another way to get him back. I promise."

But despite their assurances, Buck's grief remained a relentless tide, threatening to drown him in its depths.

He held onto his comrades, finding solace in their presence amidst the overwhelming despair threatening to engulf him.

Chapter 5: Petal by Petal

Chapter Notes

> I'm my head the General looks like Wladimir Klitschko, who are you guys picturing?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bucky traced his finger along the frigid floor, singing softly to himself, “Never saw the sun, shining so bright. Never saw things going so right. Noticing the days hurrying by. When you're in love, my how they fly. Blue days. All of them gone. Nothing but blue skies. From now on” he trailed off, looking up at the roof.

The sound of footsteps broke him from his thoughts, and he stiffened in anticipation.

Bucky whimpered when the door swung open again. The days had begun to blur together, each day bringing excruciating pain and humiliation at the hands of General Klaus.

As General Klaus entered the room and settled into the chair, Bucky's heart sank. The mere sight of the man sent a wave of revulsion coursing through him, his stomach churning with dread at what fresh torment awaited him.

"Please, no more," Bucky pleaded, his voice a mere whisper, barely audible over the echoes of the desolate chamber. He huddled in the corner, drawing his knees up to his chin, his body trembling with exhaustion and pain.

Klaus regarded him with a predatory gleam in his eyes, his lips curling into a cruel smirk. "Such a delicate flower, aren't you?" He taunted, his voice dripping with malice.

Bucky's jaw clenched in humiliation, his gaze unwavering despite the fear that threatened to consume him. He refused to let Klaus see how his words and presence affected him, to give him the satisfaction of knowing he had broken him.

But deep down, Bucky knew that he was teetering on the edge of collapse. Each day brought fresh horrors, each night a nightmare of torment and agony.

And with each passing day, it became harder to hold onto the flicker of hope that had kept him going. The hope of seeing Buck again.

As Klaus leant forward, his eyes burning with twisted desire, Bucky braced himself for what was to come, his muscles tensing with a mixture of fear and defiance.

“Your little friend has been asking questions around the camp, I hear,” Klaus remarked, accusingly pointing at Bucky.

Bucky's heart sank as he realised Klaus was referring to Buck. Panic surged through him, knowing that Klaus's attention could spell trouble for Buck.

“You leave him the hell alone, you hear me! We had a deal!” Bucky snapped, standing to his full height and clutching the blanket over his hips, his voice laced with anger as he glared at Klaus.

Klaus merely grinned, his expression sending a chill down Bucky's spine. “Don’t worry, my flower. He doesn’t interest me in the way you do,” Klaus reassured with a sinister edge to his voice.

Bucky's breath caught in his throat as Klaus stood and closed the distance between them, crowding into his space. Bucky pressed himself against the wall, his heart pounding in his chest.

Strong fingers seized Bucky's chin, forcing him to meet Klaus's gaze. Bucky's eyes widened in alarm as Klaus's other hand trailed down his bruised chest, sending shivers down his spine.

“No, stop it." Bucky pleaded weakly, attempting to push against Klaus's arm, but his efforts were feeble. After enduring days of torment, he felt drained and powerless, his will to fight diminishing with each passing moment.

Klaus's lips curled into a grin as he leant in closer, his breath hot against Bucky's skin. "You're such a spirited one, aren't you? But resistance is futile," he hissed, the edge of his voice laced with amusement.

Bucky's heart pounded in his chest, a mix of fear and desperation gripping him as Klaus's hand trailed lower, his touch igniting sparks of agony along Bucky's battered body.

"I won't let you break me," Bucky whispered, though doubt gnawed at the edges of his resolve. He knew he was teetering on the brink of

surrender, his spirit worn down by relentless torture and isolation.

Klaus's laughter echoed in the chamber, mocking and cruel. "Oh, my dear flower, you've already been broken," he taunted, his grip tightening on Bucky's chin. The other hand pulled the blanket from Bucky's weak hands and threw it behind him, leaving the younger man naked and exposed.

Desperation surged through Bucky as he summoned the last vestiges of his strength, his mind racing for a way out of this nightmare. But in the depths of Klaus's gaze, he saw only darkness and the promise of endless suffering.

"As we speak, my men are moving through the camp and erasing your very existence. As far as any records are concerned, you were never there. Your existence here in Germany stopped the moment you landed in my territory, like a gift just for me," Klaus said with a chilling grin, the words dripping with malice.

Bucky's breath caught in his throat, a cold shiver running down his spine at Klaus's ominous proclamation. The weight of Klaus's power pressed down on him like a suffocating blanket, leaving him feeling helpless and trapped.

As Klaus leant in closer, Bucky closed his eyes, bracing himself for the inevitable. His heart pounded in his chest, each beat echoing like a drum in the silence of the room. He could feel Klaus's breath on his skin, hot and suffocating, as if the air itself had turned against him.

In that moment, Bucky knew that he was truly alone, at the mercy of a man who held his fate in his hands. And as Klaus's shadow loomed over him, engulfing him, Bucky hoped that he wouldn't be forgotten.

Bucky whimpered at the bruising grip on his jaw, his fingers clawing uselessly at the hand in an attempt to break the hold.

Klaus roughly pulled Bucky's face towards his own, his breath hot against Bucky's skin as he inhaled deeply, savouring the scent of fear and defiance that emanated from him. "You belong to me, mind, body, and soul. And I will never let you go."

Their noses touched as they locked eyes, Bucky's glare piercing, tears streaming down his cheeks, a silent testament to his torment.

"Not yours, never yours," Bucky muttered defiantly, his voice barely audible through the General's bruising grip.

A twisted smirk curled on General Klaus's lips at Bucky's resistance. "Guess I'll have to prove to you that you are wrong in that regard, little flower," he chuckled darkly, his grip tightening as he snaked his hand back into Bucky's hair, pulling taut.

"Now kneel for me," Klaus ordered, his tone commanding and unforgiving, leaving no room for negotiation.

Sensing no room to disobey, Bucky's movements were slow and deliberate as he lowered himself to his knees, guided by the firm grip of Klaus's hand in his hair.

Every fibre of his being screamed against the act of submission, but the weight of Klaus's dominance bore down on him, leaving him with no choice but to comply.

As he kneeled before the General, Bucky felt a wave of shame wash over him. He clenched his jaw, fighting back the sob that threatened to betray his resolve, refusing to give Klaus the satisfaction of seeing him broken.

Klaus towered over him, his presence imposing and commanding. With a cruel smirk, Klaus traced a finger along Bucky's jawline, a gesture that sent shivers down Bucky's spine, a silent promise of the torment to come.

"You look so beautiful on your knees for me, little flower," Klaus remarked, his voice dripping with arousal. "Perhaps you'll learn to embrace your place at my feet."

Bucky's fists clenched at his sides, his nails cutting into his palms as he fought to maintain his composure. Every inch of his being rebelled against the idea of submitting to Klaus's will, but he knew that defiance would only invite further punishment.

Klaus's smirk widened as he looked down at the young man kneeling before him, his eyes glinting with cruel amusement. "Now, suck my cock and show me just how much you appreciate your place at my feet," he commanded, his voice dripping with arrogance.

Bucky's heart sank at the demeaning order, a surge of revulsion coursing through him. His hands trembled as he reluctantly reached for the zipper of Klaus's pants, his fingers fumbling with the metal teeth in a futile attempt to delay the inevitable.

With each tug of the zipper, Bucky felt a sickening sense of defeat

wash over him, the metallic rasp echoing in the air like a death knell to his dignity. His stomach churned with nausea as he lowered the zipper, revealing the bulge straining against Klaus' boxers.

A triumphant smirk played across Klaus's lips as he watched Bucky comply, relishing his control over the young man. "That's it, little flower," he taunted, his voice laced with malice and arousal. "Now show me just how much you worship your master."

Bucky clenched his eyes shut, a fierce battle raging within him as he struggled to suppress the roar of emotions stirred by the filthy words and degrading commands being thrown at him.

With trembling hands, he steadied himself by bracing one against the solid muscle of General Klaus's thigh, the warmth of the skin beneath his touch a harsh contrast to the coldness in his heart.

Summoning every ounce of willpower he possessed, Bucky forced his trembling fingers to reach for the hardened length concealed within Klaus's pants.

His touch was hesitant, his fingers brushing against the fabric before finally pulling it free, revealing the General's arousal in all its unwelcome glory.

The sight made Bucky's stomach churn with revulsion, a deep sense of shame burning within him as he grappled with what he was being forced to do.

His heart pounded with a mixture of fear and disgust as he chanced a glance up at Klaus, finding the General already watching him intently, his gaze piercing through Bucky's fragile defences.

"If I feel any teeth, then that boy back at camp will lose all of his. Do you understand me?" Klaus's voice sliced through the air like a blade, each word laced with a menacing threat that sent shivers down Bucky's spine.

Bucky whimpered, the weight of Klaus's warning pressing down on him like a leaden weight. He didn't want to be reminded of how he was betraying Buck by being on his knees in front of another man, even if it wasn't his choice. The thought of the consequences for Buck, innocent and unaware, made Bucky's heart ache with guilt.

"Yes, sir," Bucky whimpered, his voice barely above a whisper as he forced the words past the lump in his throat. He felt sick to his

stomach, the taste of bile rising in the back of his throat, but he knew that he had no choice but to comply.

With a deep breath, Bucky steeled himself against the rising tide of nausea and shame, his hands trembling as he continued to stroke the hardened length before him.

His mind raced with a chaotic whirlwind of emotions, but he pushed them aside, forcing himself to focus solely on the task at hand.

Closing his eyes briefly, Bucky leant forward, his lips quivering as he tentatively brought the head of Klaus's member into his mouth. He could feel the heat and pulsing rhythm of the General's pulse against his lips.

As he wrapped his lips and tongue around the sensitive tip, a bitter taste flooded his mouth, causing him to suppress a gag of disgust. The sensation of sucking the length further in sent a shiver down his spine, but he forced himself to push past the discomfort, driven by a desperate need to protect those he cared about.

With each motion, Bucky's resolve broke as he continued to suck and stroke with shaking hands as he surrendered to Klaus's demands.

The sounds of Klaus's moans mingled with the wet sounds of spit and gagging filled the room, echoing off the walls and searing into Bucky's consciousness like a cruel symphony of torment.

Each motion felt like a betrayal of his integrity, a surrender to Klaus's dominance that left him feeling hollow and broken. But still, he pushed everything to the back of his mind to shield Buck and anyone else who might suffer the consequences of his defiance.

Klaus's grip tightened in Bucky's dark curls as he pulled the boy's head back, a wet, resounding pop filling the room as he slid free from the boy's rosy, swollen lips.

Bucky blinked through hazy eyes, his gaze fixed on Klaus as he awaited the next command, his body trembling with a mixture of fear and anticipation.

With a predatory glint in his eyes, Klaus bit his lip in a gesture that sent a shiver down Bucky's spine. Without hesitation, he slid his thumb into the boy's warm, irresistible mouth, pressing down on his tongue and bottom lip with a forceful insistence.

Bucky's eyes widened in response, his breath hitching in his throat as he struggled to not just bite Klaus's thumb off. The taste of the General's skin lingered on his tongue, but he dared not resist, knowing the consequences would be severe.

Klaus pulled his thumb free with a slick sound, a predatory glint in his eyes as he grabbed himself and slipped back into Bucky's beautiful wet lips. With both hands entangled in the boy's curls, Klaus began to thrust in and out with vigourous intensity, each movement a brutal assertion of his dominance.

As Klaus thrust deeper into his throat, Bucky's body tensed under his touch, every nerve ending ablaze with a mixture of pain and resignation. He felt utterly powerless, trapped in Klaus's strong grip like a helpless prey ensnared by a predator.

Each thrust felt like a physical assault, the back of his throat burning with each forceful snap of the hips, the sensation almost suffocating.

Tears streamed down Bucky's cheeks, mingling with the drool leaking from his mouth as he weakly gripped Klaus's thighs in a futile attempt to stabilise himself. The overwhelming sense of vulnerability consumed him, his body trembling with the effort to endure the onslaught of Klaus's dominance.

The room seemed to spin around him in a dizzying whirlwind, and Klaus continued his relentless assault. His grunts of pleasure drowned out Bucky's stifled gasps for air, the sound echoing in the stale air like a cruel mockery.

Finally, after an eternity of relentless thrusts, Klaus's movements became more erratic. With a guttural groan, he pulled out and angled Bucky's face up, commanding him with a husky tone, "Open your mouth and stick your tongue out, flower."

Bucky complied without hesitation, his mouth obediently open and his tongue out as instructed. Klaus thrust into his mouth a few more times, each movement desperate and frenzied before finally leaning back and releasing thick ropes of cum painting Bucky's face in a grotesque display.

Bucky flinched as Klaus finished on his tongue, the warm fluid splattering across his eyelashes and cheeks in a wild, desperate frenzy. Even after it seemed like the General was completely spent, Bucky remained frozen in shock, too overwhelmed to move.

Klaus growled in satisfaction at the sight before him, revelling in the image of his boy on his knees, naked and vulnerable, his chest flushed and glistening with sweat and drool.

But it was Bucky's face that captured Klaus's attention the most, flushed and contorted with humiliation, his tongue laying on swollen lips, dripping with cum.

"So fucking perfect, little flower," Klaus groaned, his voice thick with lust as he thumbed the cooling cum dripping on Bucky's cheek into the boy's mouth.

"Suck it off," he commanded, his tone dripping with dominance.

Klaus watched intently, heat pooling in his stomach as his cock jerked half-heartedly at the sight of Bucky wrapping his lips around his thumb and obediently sucking the cum down, swallowing against his thumb.

As Klaus watched Bucky comply with his command, a surge of raw power coursed through him, fueling the primal hunger that smouldered within.

The sight of Bucky's submission stirred something dark and insatiable within Klaus, igniting a fire that burned hotter with each passing moment.

His grin widened into a feral smirk, his eyes gleaming with a predatory glint as he basked in the control he held over Bucky. The low growl that rumbled in his chest echoed the primal satisfaction that surged through him, a reminder of his dominance over the man kneeling before him.

But beneath the surface, Klaus's hunger ran deeper—a voracious appetite that craved more than mere physical obedience. He yearned for the complete surrender of body and soul, for the intoxicating rush of power that came with knowing he held Bucky's very existence in his hands.

As Bucky swallowed down his cum, Klaus felt a surge of possessiveness grip him—a possessiveness that transcended mere desire. At that moment, he was not just a General commanding a man; he was a predator revelling in the thrill of the hunt, ready to claim his prize at any cost.

Klaus knew that he would stop at nothing to possess Bucky

completely, to consume him, body and soul, until there was nothing left but the echo of his own dominance ringing through the darkness.

And as he gazed down at Bucky, he knew that he had found his prey, ripe for the taking.

Chapter End Notes

> Writing this story has been a labour of love, and I am excited to share it with all of you. Your support and feedback mean the world to me, and I hope this story brings you as much joy and excitement as it has brought me. Thank you for joining me on this adventure.

Chapter 6: A Crimson Gamble

Chapter Summary

A little insight into the mind of General Von Klaus

Klaus was enveloped in silence at his desk, save for the faint rustle of papers and the occasional creak of his leather chair.

But beneath the stillness of the room, a storm raged within him—a storm of twisted desires and insatiable fantasies.

Leaning back in his chair, Klaus allowed himself to succumb to the darkness that simmered just beneath the surface. His gaze fixed on the photograph before him, a picture torn from Bucky's military file.

In the photo, the boy smiled, his eyes sparkling with youthful innocence—a stark contrast to the fire that Klaus knew lay within.

As Klaus traced the contours of Bucky's face with trembling fingers, a primal hunger stirred within him.

In the depths of his mind, Klaus painted vivid fantasies of domination and possession, each more twisted than the last.

He saw himself standing over Bucky, his gaze smouldering with desire as he whispered sweet promises of pain and pleasure.

He'd had the boy for two weeks now and he hadn't even began to do all the things he wanted with him. The boy made him insatiable and drew out the darkest parts of him, the parts that he'd hid for so long.

He revelled in the thought of breaking the boy's spirit, of watching him crumble beneath the weight of Klaus' touch, the feel of him trembling against his hands, his chest, and his lips.

But it wasn't just the physical aspect that drew Klaus in—it was the power and control that he held over Bucky. With a mere word or gesture, Klaus could shatter the boy's world, leaving him broken and submissive at his feet.

Lost in his reverie, Klaus barely noticed the passage of time, his obsession consuming him like a ravenous flame. He was a predator, driven only by primal urges and insatiable hunger, and Bucky was his

unwitting prey.

As the night wore on, Klaus's fantasies grew more grotesque. He imagined himself sinking his teeth into Bucky's soft flesh, marking him as his own in a savage display of possession. He revelled in the thought of Bucky's screams and moans echoing through the darkness, a symphony of terror and pleasure.

As the night wore on, Klaus found himself unable to resist the irresistible pull towards Bucky's room. The dimly lit corridors of the military compound became his hunting ground, his footsteps echoing like whispers of temptation in the stillness of the night.

With each step, Klaus's heart pounded in his chest, creating a rhythm of anticipation and desire. He moved with silent purpose, his senses heightened as he stalked through the halls like a predator on the prowl.

Finally, he reached the door to Bucky's room. A barrier between him and the object of his obsession. With steady hands, Klaus reached out to touch the cold metal handle, his breath deepening as he turned it slowly and silently.

The door swung open carefully, revealing the darkness within. Klaus slipped inside like a shadow, his eyes adjusting to the dim light as he surveyed the meagre room.

There, in the centre of the space, lay Bucky—peaceful in slumber, unaware of the predator that watched him from the shadows. Klaus's gaze lingered on the boy's form, tracing the contours of his face and naked body with hungry eyes.

A surge of arousal coursed through Klaus's veins, his desires twisted and dark as he imagined himself dominating Bucky in his vulnerable state. He longed to possess the boy completely, to claim him as his own, and to revel in the power he held over him.

With each passing moment, Klaus's control slipped further away, consumed by the flames of his desire. He moved closer to Bucky, his footsteps silent on the cold floor as he stood over him.

Klaus grabbed his growing hard on and bit his lip to stifle his moan. He imagined himself touching Bucky—caressing his skin, tracing the lines of his body with fevered hands. He basked in the thought of

awakening the boy's desires and seeing him succumb to pleasure and pain alike.

Klaus stood over Bucky, his breath quickening. He struggled to contain the raging storm of desire that threatened to consume him whole.

His hand felt like it was vibrating as it reached out towards the sleeping boy, drawn to him like a moth to a flame.

Klaus brushed his fingers against Bucky’s cheek, marvelling at the softness of his skin beneath his touch, amidst the bruises and the odd cuts and scrapes. A low growl escaped his lips as he leant closer, his breath hot against Bucky’s ear.

In that moment, Klaus was consumed by a primal urge—an insatiable hunger that demanded to be sated. His mind swirled with images, each more depraved than the last.

He revelled in the raw power he held over Bucky’s sleeping form. It was a heady intoxication, a rush of adrenaline that fueled his darkest desires and drove him ever onward towards the edge of insanity.

Klaus traced the outline of Bucky’s lips, his touch feather-light yet laden with a promise of things to come. He could feel the boy’s breath against his skin, warm and inviting, as he leant closer, his heart hammering in his chest.

Slowly, he traced his finger further down the boy's throat before settling his hand softly around Bucky’s throat, feeling the pulse beating against his fingers.

Klaus burned the image into his memory, wanting to remember how innocent his flower looked at this moment.

Smirking to himself, he increased the pressure of his grip, tightening his hand around the boy's throat.

Bucky's eyes snapped open from something pushing down on his neck, and he was met with a chilling sight—the figure of General Klaus looming over him.

Panic surged through him like a tidal wave, his heart racing as he instinctively tried to push himself away.

Klaus squeezed Bucky's throat with a vice-like grip. The boy's breath caught in his throat, his chest heaving as he struggled against his iron grasp, his pulse thumping.

"Wh-what are you doing?" Bucky gasped, his voice choked with fear, as he clawed at Klaus's hand, desperately trying to pry it away. But the General's grip only tightened, cutting off his air supply further and sending waves of terror coursing through him.

"You're mine, my flower," Klaus's voice was a low, guttural growl, his eyes burning with a hunger that made Bucky's blood run cold.

"I have your life in my hands. Do you understand what that means? I own you." Klaus rumbled, licking his teeth.

Bucky's heart hammered in his chest, a primal instinct driving him to fight back against the crazed man that loomed over him.

With a surge of adrenaline, he lashed out against Klaus, his fists pounding against the General's chest in a frantic bid for freedom.

"Let go of me!" Bucky's voice was a desperate plea, his rasped screams echoing through the room. But Klaus only chuckled darkly, the sound sending shivers down Bucky's spine as he leant closer, his breath hot against the boy's ear.

"Such spirit, such fire," Klaus murmured, licking a stripe up Bucky’s throat to his ear, his voice dripping with malice as he tightened his grip on Bucky's throat. "But resistance only makes it sweeter, my flower."

With a surge of panic, Bucky continued to struggle against Klaus, his mind racing with terror as he fought for his life. But with each hit, the General's arousal only grew, fueled by Bucky's desperation and fear.

And as the darkness closed in around him, enveloping him in its suffocating embrace, Bucky pictured Buck’s blue eyes and warm smile. And with one last rasp, he surrendered to the darkness.

Klaus released his grip and waited impatiently for Bucky to wake up. He smacked the boy's face harshly and smirked as Bucky groaned and slowly blinked his eyes open.

Bucky's consciousness flickered back into awareness from the stinging sensation. He found himself once again trapped in the suffocating grasp of General Klaus.

Panic surged through him anew as he struggled against the hand around his throat, his mind a whirlwind of terror and desperation, kicking out in frantic movements.

"Please... let me go," Bucky gasped, his voice hoarse with fear as he clawed at Klaus's hand, his nails digging into flesh in a futile attempt to break free.

But the General's grip only tightened, cutting off his air supply and sending waves of dizziness crashing over him.

Bucky's struggles grew more frantic, his body writhing against Klaus's relentless hold. But the General seemed to relish in his torment, his arousal growing with each display of defiance.

And then, just as Bucky felt the darkness closing in around him again, Klaus released his grip, allowing the boy to gasp for air as he struggled to regain his bearings. But before he could fully comprehend what was happening, Klaus's hand was upon him once again, tightening around his throat with renewed ferocity.

The cycle repeated itself several times over, with Klaus allowing Bucky to wake up only to choke him out again. The General's sadistic pleasure grew with each iteration.

As Bucky's breaths came in ragged gasps, his mind raced. He knew he couldn't endure much longer under Klaus' relentless assault. With blackness creeping into his vision, the darkness threatened to consume him whole.

Summoning every ounce of courage he possessed, Bucky made a split-second decision. If he couldn't overpower Klaus physically, perhaps he could outmanoeuvre him mentally.

With a shuttering breath, he summoned a facade of false seduction, tapping into Klaus's twisted desires to distract him from his suffocating grip.

"General," Bucky whispered, his voice raspy and dripping with feigned desire as he met Klaus's gaze with a sultry, watery stare. "You're so strong, so powerful... I want more."

Klaus's grip faltered for a moment, his eyes narrowing, but Bucky pressed on, carefully climbing into the General's lap, his heart pounding in his chest as he played this dangerous game.

"I know you want me, Klaus," Bucky continued, his voice a seductive purr as he reached out to trace the contours of Klaus's jawline with trembling fingers. "And I want you too..."

For a moment, Klaus seemed taken aback by Bucky's sudden change in demeanour, his grip loosening ever so slightly. But then, a predatory grin spread across his lips, his arousal straining against Bucky's stomach at the promise of forbidden pleasures.

"You think you can manipulate me, my flower?" Klaus's voice was a low rumble, his eyes gleaming with anticipation as he leant closer, his breath hot against Bucky's skin. "Very well. Show me what you're made of."

With every fibre of his being, Bucky fought to keep his facade from crumbling and to keep Klaus distracted long enough to loosen his grip and escape. His heart raced with adrenaline as he played the dangerous game of seduction, his survival hanging by a thread.

Bucky knew that he was walking a razor's edge between life and death. But in that moment, he was willing to risk it all. For a chance to escape, a chance to leave this place and never look back.

Bucky's lips met Klaus's in a desperate kiss, his hand moved with stealth, palming the General's arousal while his other hand balled into a fist.

Klaus moved to lean back and look at Bucky, but Bucky quickly pulled him deeper into the kiss, opening his mouth for more.

When he was sure the General was truly distracted, he decided now was the time to make his move.

With a surge of adrenaline, Bucky unleashed a powerful punch towards Klaus' temple, catching him off guard and sending him stumbling backwards with a grunt of pain.

Seizing the opportunity, Bucky broke free from Klaus's grasp and made for the door. He thanked the stars when it opened. Klaus mustn't have locked it when he came in behind himself.

He bolted down the dimly lit hallway, his heart pounding in his chest as he ran for his life. Every step was fueled by gut-wrenching fear and survival instincts, his mind racing with the knowledge that his freedom hung in the balance.

As Bucky's footsteps echoed through the corridors, his heart pounded in his chest like a drumbeat.

Each turn seemed to lead him further into the maze—a labyrinth of corridors.

With each step, his breath came in ragged gasps, his lungs burning with exertion as he pushed himself to run faster, to outpace the man who pursued him.

But no matter how fast he ran or how far he fled, the roar and footsteps of General Klaus loomed ever closer, a relentless predator on the hunt.

And then, just as Bucky thought he could run no further, he rounded a corner and found himself face-to-face with a dead end—a locked door that stood between him and freedom.

Panic surged through him like a tidal wave as he slammed himself against it. pounding on the unforgiving metal, his fists bruised and bloodied from the effort.

"Let me out!" he screamed, his voice echoing through the empty corridor like a desperate plea for salvation. “Anyone! Please, god, let me the fuck outta here!”.

But there was no response.

And then, just as the terror threatened to consume him whole, he heard it—the sound of heavy footsteps echoing through the darkness, drawing closer with each passing second until they stopped a few metres behind him.

With a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, Bucky turned to face his pursuer, his eyes wide with panic.

And there, looming before him like a wall of death, stood General Klaus—a twisted grin on his lips and madness burning in his eyes.

"Ah, there you are, my flower," he purred, his voice dripping with excitement as he advanced upon Bucky with slow, deliberate steps.

With nowhere left to run, Bucky backed against the locked door, his heart hammering in his chest as he prepared to face his fate.

He tried the handle again, praying it would magically open. “Fucking

please, just give me this," he prayed, but it wouldn't budge.

With his back pressed against the cold metal door, Bucky's heart pounded in his chest as Klaus stalked towards him with menacing intent.

Fear and complete desperation fueled his actions as he screamed at the General to stay back, his voice laced with raw panic.

"Get the fuck back!" Bucky's voice echoed through the corridor as he braced himself for whatever awaited him.

But Klaus's twisted grin only widened, his eyes gleaming with pleasure as he closed in on his prey.

Summoning every ounce of courage he possessed, Bucky made a split-second decision.

With a surge of adrenaline, he lunged forward, attempting to dart past Klaus and make a break for it. But before he could even take a step past the man, Klaus's strong arms wrapped around his waist, pulling him back with brutal force.

Bucky struggled against Klaus's grip, his heart racing as he fought for his life with every fibre of his being.

But the General's strength was overpowering and his hold unyielding, and Bucky was just too weak from all the torment his body had endured as Klaus dragged Bucky back towards him.

Panic surged through Bucky like a tidal wave as he realised that escape was futile—that he was trapped, alone and defenceless, in the clutches of a predator. A man he had most likely royally pissed off.

Klaus's grip tightened around Bucky's waist, pulling him taut against his chest. The cold steel of a knife pressed against his throat sent shivers of terror coursing through him. Bucky's breath caught in his throat, his body trembling with fear as he felt the sharp edge of the blade against his skin.

Tears welled up in Bucky's eyes as he cried out in Klaus's arms, all of it bearing down on him like a crushing weight. "P-please," he choked out between sobs, his voice raw. "Just let me go... please..."

But Klaus only chuckled darkly, the sound sending chills down Bucky's spine as he leaned in closer, his breath hot against the boy's ear. "Oh,

my flower," he murmured, his voice a low rumble that dripped with barely controlled intent. "You're not going anywhere."

Bucky struggled against Klaus's hold, his mind racing with thoughts of escape. But the General's grip was unyielding, his hold on Bucky like a vice that refused to be broken.

"Please," Bucky pleaded, his voice barely a whisper as he gazed back up at Klaus with tear-filled eyes. "I won't try to run again... Just please don't hurt me."

Klaus's only response was a cruel smile, his eyes gleaming with sadistic pleasure as he tightened his grip on Bucky's throat, the blade of the knife drawing a drop of blood as it broke the delicate skin of Bucky's throat.

As Klaus forced Bucky onto the floor, his chest pressing against the cold, hard surface, Bucky's heart pounded.

Klaus straddled Bucky's waist, his weight bearing down heavily, making it impossible for Bucky to move.

Bucky's eyes widened in terror as he saw the knife glinting in Klaus's hand, scared of what was about to happen. "Please, no!" Bucky's voice trembled with fear as he pleaded, tears already streaming down his face. "I'll do anything. I'll be good. Just please don't hurt me anymore. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry for trying to run."

Klaus's cruel laughter filled the room, sending shivers down Bucky's spine. "You thought you could escape me, my flower?" Klaus's voice was laced with malice as he leant in close, the tip of the knife tracing a line across the smooth skin on the small of his back. "But you belong to me now. You're mine, and you'll learn to obey."

"Please, don't!" Bucky cried out. "Just let me go, please! Buck, help me!" He screamed out for his lover, even though he knew Buck wasn't there to save him.

And then Klaus started. The first press of the knife slicing into his skin sent waves of excruciating pain through his nervous system. He tried to bite back the scream, but it broke through his lips in a blood-curling howl. Every muscle in his body contracting with each flick and drag of the knife.

But Buck remained absent, his absence a cruel reminder of Bucky's isolation, and he knew that Buck wasn't coming to save him.

Klaus's hold on Bucky tightened, his grip on the knife unyielding as he continued to carve his mark into the boy's flesh.

But Klaus ignored his pleas, his grip tightening on the knife as he carved his mark into Bucky's flesh. With each stroke of the blade, Bucky felt as if his very soul was being torn apart, his scream growing louder and more desperate with each letter.

Unable to restrain himself from the boy's beautiful screams, Klaus pulled his cock free from the tight confines of his pants and spread the boy's cheeks, lubing himself with the blood collecting in the small of his back.

With no regard to how Bucky was feeling, he pushed himself into the tight ring of muscle and groaned in a frenzied explosion of pleasure.

The pain was unbearable—a searing agony that tore through Bucky's body like fire. And as Klaus pushed himself into Bucky, the boy's screams mingled with the sounds of his own moans.

Bucky's vision blurred with tears as he felt Klaus's cold touch against his skin and the rough hands leaving trails of blood in their wake. With each thrust, Bucky's cries grew louder, his voice a desperate plea for mercy that fell on deaf ears.

But Klaus showed no mercy, his lust driving him ever onward as he claimed Bucky as his own. And as the darkness closed in around him, Bucky felt himself slip further and further away, his mind consumed by pain.

With a final flick of the knife, Klaus completed his task, carving his ownership into Bucky's flesh. He smeared the blood across Bucky's lower back, his smirk dripping with pride as he beheld the words carved into his boy's skin: "Property of General Von Klaus."

"It's perfect my little flower, now everyone will understand you belong to me"

With Buck's name on his lips, Bucky surrendered to the darkness, his body violated and broken beneath Klaus.

Chapter 7: Shadows of Doubt

Chapter Summary

Some Buck angst for you all

Chapter Notes

Guy's I'm so embarrassed, I just went through and proof read the previous chapters last night. So many mistakes I've updated and fixed all of it now, so thank you for still liking it anyway

It had been two weeks that had dragged by since Buck had last seen Bucky. Two long weeks of uncertainty, fear, and worry gnawing away at his resolve.

Buck felt himself beginning to crack. It started with the whispers—the insidious doubts that wormed their way into his mind, chipping away at his confidence and sowing seeds of paranoia.

Was Bucky still alive? Was he enduring the worst of what the Germans had to offer? Was Bucky still fighting to come back to him, or had he given up?

The questions gnawed at him like a festering disease, devouring his peace of mind and leaving behind holes of doubt.

And then came the anger—the seething rage that simmered just beneath the surface, threatening to boil over at the smallest of things. He'd always had this rage inside him from his childhood, but it was always Bucky that kept him cool.

Without him, he was starting to crack.

Buck had started to lash out at his fellow prisoners, snapping at their attempts at comfort and retreating into bitter solitude.

He couldn't bear their pitying glances or their hollow words of comfort—not when all he could think about was his boyfriend, his other half, who had been torn from his side without warning or explanation.

And that was just it. There was no explanation about anything at all. Nothing had come through the radio since the Germans had come and removed Bucky’s existence from the camp. Not a damn fucking thing.

But worst of all was the silence—the deafening silence that filled the void left by Bucky's disappearance, suffocating Buck.

He missed the sound of Bucky's boisterous laughter, the warmth of his smile, and the easy way in which he kept the men on their toes, which had kept them feeling like everything was going to be okay and that had sustained them through the darkest days of the war.

Without him, the world felt empty, devoid of meaning or purpose. And as the days turned into weeks, Buck felt himself teetering on the edge of madness, his grip on reality slipping.

He knew that he had to find a way to hold himself together and keep fighting in the face of overwhelming odds.

But deep down, in the darkest recesses of his soul, he feared that he was losing the battle—that the cracks in his facade were widening with each passing day, threatening to swallow him whole without Bucky there to keep him from the ledge.

The makeshift showers buzzed with the low murmur of conversation as Buck made his way through the crowded room, his eyes scanning the faces of the men gathered within.

He walked over to the sink, grabbed some soap, and started washing his face and neck, scrubbing at the grime to keep his mind busy.

And then he heard it—the venomous whispers that sent a shiver of rage down his spine, their voices spiteful and amused.

Buck froze, his blood turning to ice in his veins as he listened to the soldier's cruel taunts.

"You reckon Egan is dead yet?" The British soldier's voice was a sneer, his tone laced with disgust.

"Probably rotting in a ditch somewhere, thanks to the General. Poor bastard never stood a chance." The other replied.

Buck's vision went red as a white-hot rage surged through him, drowning out the hustle of voices around him. Without a second thought, he advanced on the soldiers, his fists clenched at his sides and his eyes blazing with fury.

"You got something to say?" Buck's voice was a low growl, each word dripping with venom as he stalked towards the men.

The soldier's eyes widened in recognition as they scrambled to backtrack, but Buck was already upon them, his patience worn thin by the weight of his grief.

"You think it's funny to talk about a good man's fate like it's some kind of joke?" Buck's voice rose to a thunderous roar, echoing through the barracks with a chilling intensity. "Do you have any idea what Bucky's been through? What he means to me?"

The second soldier stammered incoherently, his feeble attempts at explanation falling on deaf ears as Buck's rage finally boiled over, spilling forth in a torrent of violence.

With a snarl, Buck lashed out, charging forward, his fists raining down on the two soldiers.

Blow after blow landed with bone-crushing force, each strike driven by a fierce mix of grief, rage, and a broken heart.

The sound of flesh meeting flesh echoed through the barracks, punctuated by the soldier's desperate cries for Buck to stop and the sickening crunch of cartilage breaking under his fist.

He didn’t even feel the hands pulling at him or the yells telling him to stop, he was lost in his own private hell.

It was only when a pair of strong arms wrapped around him, pulling him, that Buck finally snapped out of his bloodlust-induced trance.

He staggered backwards, his chest heaving with exertion as he struggled to regain his composure.

The two soldiers lay crumpled on the ground, a broken and bloodied

mess, but still breathing.

Buck's fists throbbed with pain, but the physical discomfort was nothing compared to the searing agony that gnawed at his heart.

As the chaos of the moment faded into white noise, Buck cast one last glance at the men’s prone forms before turning on his heel and stalking out of the barracks.

He made his way to the perimeter of the camp, ignoring the watchful stares of the German soldiers in the watchtower. Buck approached the fence and squatted down, his chest heaving with exertion.

He clenched his fists, feeling the sting of his split knuckles as blood dripped onto the snow below.

His thoughts were a whirlwind of emotions, each one more suffocating than the last. Anger, guilt, grief—they swirled around him like a storm, threatening to pull him under.

With a shaky breath, Buck pressed his palms against his forehead, eyes fixed on the horizon beyond, as he breathed through the jitters of the fight.

He didn't know what anything meant anymore and didn't know if he would ever see Bucky again. He just didn’t know.

As Buck sat by the fence, lost in his thoughts, a German soldier approached, his expression commanding and his hand hovering over his holster.

"You there, get away from the fence," he barked in heavily accented English.

Still feeling the effects of the words the two soldiers had spoken, he threw caution to the wind and rounded on the soldier, his fists clenched at his sides.

"I've had enough for one day," he spat, his voice thick with unbridled anger. "You're going to tell me what you know about General Klaus and where the hell John Clarence Egan is! You have to know something!" He accused him, pointing his finger at the soldier.

The soldier's eyes widened in surprise at Buck's sudden outburst, but he quickly regained his composure, his features hardening into a mask of indifference.

"I know nothing of your comrade or this General Klaus," he replied coolly, his voice tinged with annoyance.

"Now get away from the fence before I put a bullet in you."

But Buck refused to back down. "I don't believe you," he growled, his voice low and dangerous. "You're hiding something, and I'm going to find out what it is."

The soldier bristled at Buck's accusation, his hand straying again to the sidearm holstered at his hip.

"You dare talk to me?" He spat, his voice rising in anger. "You are

nothing but a prisoner, a dog on a leash. You have no right to make demands."

But Buck was undeterred, his gaze unwavering as he locked eyes with the soldier. "I have every right to know what happened to my friend," he declared, his voice ringing with conviction. "And I won't rest until I find out the truth."

For a tense moment, the soldier and Buck stared each other down, the air thick with tension and unspoken threats.

But then, with a laugh, the soldier grinned, showing all his teeth, his shoulders shaking with laughter.

"Fine," he smirked. "I will tell you what I know. But you will not like what you hear."

And as the soldier began to speak, recounting tales of General Klaus's cruelty and the horrors that awaited those who crossed him, Buck listened intently, his heart heavy with dread.

“Your friend is either dead or he’s wishing he was. If the tales of our General are true, then I wish I was there to watch him tear your buddy apart, you filthy fucking American.”

As the German soldier callously laughed at the plight of Bucky, Buck's blood boiled with rage.

Without a second thought, he lunged forward, his fists clenched and ready to strike.

But before he could reach the soldier, a strong hand gripped his shoulder, pulling him back with surprising force.

It was Brady, his expression a mixture of concern and warning.

"Easy there, Buck," he said quietly, his voice a soothing counterpoint to Buck's raging emotions. "You don't want to do anything you'll regret."

But Buck's fury was like a wildfire, burning hot and fierce within him. "This bastard deserves it," he growled, his voice thick with anger. "He has no right to laugh at Bucky."

Brady’s grip tightened, his eyes pleading with Buck to listen. "I know, Buck, I know," he said softly. "But violence won't solve anything. We have to keep our heads down, bide our time, and wait for the right moment to strike."

Reluctantly, Buck nodded, his fists unclenching as he forced himself to calm down. With a deep breath, he turned to face the German soldier, his eyes blazing.

"I'm sorry," he spat through gritted teeth, his words laced with bitter sarcasm. "I must be more tired than I thought."

The soldier sneered in response, his expression one of smug satisfaction. "See that you keep your pet on a tighter leash next time," he spat, before turning on his heel and stalking away.

As the soldier disappeared from view, Buck sagged against Brady, his shoulders slumping with exhaustion and defeat.

"Thanks," he muttered, his voice heavy with resignation. "I don't know what I would've done if you hadn't been there."

Brady offered him a reassuring smile, his hand still resting on Buck's shoulder. "We're in this together, Buck," he said quietly. "No matter what happens, we'll get through it. Together. Now come on, let’s clean up your hands.”

As Brady led Buck back into their barracks, he could see the turmoil etched on Buck's face.

With gentle hands, he guided Buck to sit down on Bucky's bunk, the familiarity of the space offering a small measure of comfort for Buck.

Sitting down beside Buck, Brady pulled out a rag and a canteen of water, gently cleaning the blood from Buck's split knuckles.

"Easy there, Buck," he said softly, his voice a soothing presence amid Buck's cold expression.

"Let me take care of those for you."

Buck nodded silently, his gaze fixed on Bucky’s sweater, tucked half under his bunk’s pillow as Brady tended to his wounds.

The silence hanging heavy between them, filled with unspoken words

and shared grief.

After a moment, Brady broke the silence, his voice tinged with sadness and nostalgia. "You know, the first time I met Bucky, I knew there was something special about him," he said quietly, his eyes distant as he reminisced.

"He had this spark—this fire in his eyes that lit up the whole room. He was so alive, you know? Truly alive like a wildfire, my Mumma would say."

Buck's chest tightened at the mention of Bucky, his heart aching with longing and loss.

"Yeah," he murmured, his voice barely above a whisper. "He's always had a way of lighting up a room."

Brady nodded, a wistful smile tugging at the corners of his lips. "If anyone can survive what's out there, it's Bucky," he said firmly, his voice filled with confidence.

"He's a fighter, Buck. Always has been, and always will be. And no matter what happens, I believe he'll come out on top."

Buck's eyes flickered with a glimmer of hope at Brady's words, a small beacon of hope in the face of grief that threatened to consume him.

"I hope you're right," he said quietly, his voice tinged with pain.

Brady squeezed Buck's shoulder reassuringly, his gaze steady and unwavering.

"I am," he said firmly. "We just have to hold on to that hope, Buck. It's all we've got, and it’s all your boy Bucky has. don’t give up on him."

As Brady continued to clean Buck's bloodied hands, Buck's mind drifted back to a simpler time—a memory of laughter and mischief shared with Bucky.

"Did I ever tell you about the time Bucky convinced me to sneak out of boot camp one night?" Buck said, a small smile playing at the corners of his lips.

"We found an old lake, and we went swimming under the moonlight. It was the most alive I've ever felt."

Brady's eyes lit up with happiness, a fondness evident in his expression. "He convinced our strait-laced leader to break the rules?" he chuckled, raising his eyebrows. "I bet you two were like a pair of mischievous kids, causing trouble wherever you went."

Buck nodded, the memory flooding back with vivid clarity. "Yeah, we were, and then the next day, we both caught a cold from swimming in that freezing water," he said, a soft chuckle escaping his lips.

"But even when our Drill Sergeant had it out for Bucky and made him run forty laps of the field with a weighted backpack alone, he never lost that fire in his eyes. He always stood up for what he believed in, no matter the consequences."

Brady's smile widened at the story, a warmth spreading through him at the thought of his spirited friend. "That's Bucky for you," he said with a grin. "Always full of fire, no matter what."

Buck nodded in agreement, a bittersweet pang tugging at his heart.

"Yeah," he murmured, his voice tinged with longing as tears sprung to his eyes. "I miss him, Brady. I miss him so damn much."

Brady reached out, resting a hand on Buck's shoulder in a gesture of comfort, squeezing softly. "I know, Buck," he said gently. "We all do. But we'll find him, I promise. And when we do, we'll make sure he knows just how much he means to us."

Buck's voice caught in his throat, his chest tightening with the weight of his emotions.

"I wanted to kill those men, Brady," he admitted, his voice trembling with raw honesty. "I wanted to lash out, to make them pay for what they said about Bucky. I'm scared, Brady. Scared that I'm losing control, that I'm not the calm and collected one everyone thinks I am."

Brady's gaze softened, his eyes reflecting a deep understanding of Buck's inner turmoil.

"It's okay to feel that way, Buck," he said gently, his tone reassuring. "We're all struggling with Bucky's absence, with the uncertainty of what's to come. But you're not alone in this. We're here for you, Buck. I'm here for you."

Buck nodded. A sense of calm washed over him at Brady's words. "Thanks, Brady," he said quietly, his voice choked with emotion. "I don't know what I'd do without you all."

Brady smiled a warm and genuine expression that lifted the heavyweight from Buck's shoulders. "You don't have to do anything alone, Buck," he said firmly. "We're a team, remember? We'll get through this together."

Chapter 8: Echoes Of Crimson

The dim light of dawn filtered the barred windows, casting long shadows across the cold stone floor.

As consciousness slowly returned to him, Bucky found himself disoriented, his mind foggy. Slowly, he blinked away the haze, his eyes adjusting to the dim light as he took in his surroundings.

Every breath was a struggle. Each exhale was a painful reminder of the violence that had been inflicted upon him after his mad dash for freedom had failed.

To his surprise, he realised that he was no longer in his cell. Instead, he found himself in a small, dimly lit room with a desk, a shower, and a toilet in one corner. The sight of the unfamiliar surroundings sent a surge of panic coursing through him, his heart pounding in his chest as he struggled to make sense of what was happening.

But as the fog of confusion began to lift, Bucky's gaze fell upon the shower, and he felt a sudden, overwhelming urge to wash away the filth and blood that clung to his skin. With trembling hands, he pushed himself to his feet and made his way to the shower, his steps slow and unsteady.

As he stepped beneath the spray of water, Bucky felt the warmth seeping into his bones, soothing the ache that throbbed in every muscle of his battered body. For a brief moment, he allowed himself to close his eyes and simply bask in the sensation, the rush of water washing away the pain that had consumed him.

But as the water cascaded over him, Bucky felt a sudden surge of emotion welling up inside him—a tidal wave of grief and anger that threatened to consume him whole. With a choked sob, he sank to the bottom of the shower, his body wracked with sobs as he allowed himself to finally release the pent-up emotions that had been building inside him for so long.

Tears mingled with the water as they streamed down his cheeks, his cries echoing off the tiled walls like a mournful dirge. In that moment, Bucky felt utterly and completely alone, his soul laid bare before the cruel gaze of fate.

But even as he wept, Bucky knew that he could not afford to wallow

in self-pity—that he had to find the strength to carry on, to fight for his survival with every ounce of his being.

With a shuddering breath, he forced himself to stand, his muscles and back screaming with every movement as he reached for the soap and began to scrub away the blood and grime that stained his skin.

It was a painful process, with the water turning red with each movement, sending waves of agony coursing through his battered body.

Bucky scrubbed his body until he was red and raw, his skin irritated and tender.

As he finished showering, Bucky turned off the water and stepped out of the shower, his body trembling with exhaustion. With shaky hands, he reached for the towel that hung nearby and began to dry himself off, the soft fabric a welcome relief against his bruised and battered skin.

But as he glanced around the room, Bucky realised that someone had left a set of clothes on the chair near the desk.

Bucky moved towards the desk and carefully picked up the clothes, waiting for the other shoe to drop. Once he was sure that nothing was going to happen and no one was going to barge in, he calmed down a bit.

With slow, painstaking movements, he pulled on the sweater and pants that had been left for him, each movement sending waves of pain coursing through his battered body.

It was a painful process, with each article of clothing feeling like a weight on his shoulders.

With a final, weary sigh, Bucky finished dressing and made his way to the bed, his body protesting with every step. Gingerly, he lowered himself onto the mattress, the softness of the bed a stark contrast to the cold hardness of the cell he had been imprisoned in previously.

As he sat on the edge of the bed, Bucky couldn't shake the feeling of emptiness that gnawed at his insides. He longed for the warmth of Buck's embrace, for the reassurance of his presence by his side.

Closing his eyes, Bucky whispered a silent prayer to whatever higher power might be listening, a desperate plea for Buck to come to his

rescue, to save him from the darkness that threatened to consume him whole.

But even as he prayed, Bucky knew that he couldn't rely on miracles to save him—that he had to find the strength to save himself, to break free from Klaus's clutches.

Bucky squared his shoulders and laid back on the bed. His heart was filled with hope and longing, curling into a ball, imagining Buck was against his back, shielding him from all the pain and torment. He closed his eyes and drifted into an uneasy sleep.

As the hours dragged on, Bucky found himself lost in the suffocating silence of the room, his mind tormented by the memories of the horrors he had endured. Every creak of the floorboards and every whisper of the wind outside seemed to echo in the cold room.

But his solitude was abruptly shattered by the heavy footsteps that echoed through the room, signalling the arrival of General Klaus. Fear clenched at Bucky's heart as he watched Klaus enter, his presence casting a shadow of dread over the room.

With a curt nod, Klaus motioned for Bucky to sit up, his voice cold and commanding as he issued his orders. "Sit up, boy." Klaus's voice was a low growl, his eyes cold and devoid of emotion. "I'm going to clean your wounds."

Bucky's heart hammered in his chest as he obeyed Klaus's command, his movements slow and deliberate as he forced himself to sit up on the edge of the bed. With trembling hands, he reached behind him to pull up his sweater, exposing the raw, bloody wound that marred his back.

Klaus wasted no time in getting to work, his hands deft and sure as he cleaned the wound with antiseptic, his touch gentle yet firm. Despite his fear, Bucky couldn't help but flinch at the sting of the alcohol against his battered skin, tears welling up in his eyes as he struggled to hold back his cries of pain.

But Klaus showed no mercy, his expression stoic as he worked, his focus unwavering as he tended to Bucky's injuries. With each pass of the cloth, Bucky felt the weight of Klaus's gaze bearing down upon him, a silent reminder of the power that the General held over him.

As Klaus finished cleaning the wound, he reached for a roll of bandages and began to wrap them tightly around Bucky's torso, his movements precise and methodical. With each turn of the bandage, Bucky felt the pain in his back recede, replaced by a dull ache that throbbed with every heartbeat.

But despite the physical relief, Bucky couldn't shake the feeling of unease that gnawed at his insides. He knew that Klaus's sudden act of kindness was nothing more than a ploy to keep him compliant, and ensure that he remained under the General's control.

Once Klaus finished bandaging the wound, Bucky hesitated for a moment before mustering up the courage to speak, his voice barely above a whisper as he dared to voice the question that had been weighing on his mind.

"General," he began, his voice trembling with fear and uncertainty. "May... may I have a pencil and a piece of paper?"

For a moment, Klaus regarded him with a cold, calculating stare, his expression unreadable. But then, to Bucky's surprise, a small smirk tugged at the corners of Klaus's lips, as if amused by Bucky's request.

"Very well," Klaus said simply, his voice a low rumble that sent shivers down Bucky's spine. "But remember, boy—your fate lies in my hands. Don't make me regret this."

With a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, Bucky nodded silently, his heart heavy with the weight of Klaus's words. As he watched, Klaus turned around to the door and called out to the guards, barking an order to the man who opened the door. He promptly scurried off to fetch the supplies.

As Bucky waited, his mind raced with thoughts of what to write. With trembling hands, he picked up the pencil and paper when they were brought in, his heart pounding with anticipation as he prepared to put his thoughts into words.

Despite the pain and fear that still gnawed at him, he couldn't help but feel a glimmer of hope stirring within him—a hope that maybe, just maybe, this letter would reach Buck.

Under the watchful gaze of General Klaus, Bucky's hand trembled as he reached for the pencil and paper, his movements slow and deliberate, as if he were afraid Klaus would change his mind.

With a glance up to ensure that Klaus wasn't moving, Bucky limped over to the bare desk and gingerly lowered himself into the chair, his heart pounding in his chest as he prepared to put his thoughts into words.

With a deep breath, Bucky brought the pencil to the paper, his hand shaking with a mixture of fear and anticipation. For a moment, he hesitated, his mind racing with doubts and insecurities. But then, with a steely resolve, he began to write.

"My dearest Buck," Bucky's hand trembled as he put pen to paper, his words flowing freely as if they were being drawn from the depths of his soul. "I don't know if this letter will ever reach you, but I have to try. I'm trapped in a nightmare, Buck, and I don't know if I'll ever escape."

Tears welled up in Bucky's eyes as he wrote, his vision blurring. But he pushed on, his hand moving across the page with a desperate urgency.

"Every moment feels like an eternity, Buck," Bucky continued, his hand shaking. "I can't bear the thought of never seeing you again, of never feeling your touch or hearing your voice. Please, Buck, don't give up on me. I need you now more than ever. I need your love to pull me back from the edge."

As Bucky poured his heart out onto the page, he felt a glimmer of hope stirring within him—a hope that maybe, just maybe, this letter would find its way to Buck and bring him back to Buck's side.

With a final flourish, he signed his name at the bottom of the page, the ink smudging slightly from the tears that had fallen onto the paper.

As Bucky moved to tuck the letter into his pocket, the heavy hand of the General landed on his shoulder, stopping him in his tracks.

"Where do you think that's going, my flower?" Klaus's voice was a low growl, his eyes gleaming with malice as he stared down at Bucky.

Bucky's heart sank as he realised that there would be no privacy. With a trembling hand, he withdrew the letter from his pocket and held it out to Klaus, his fingers shaking as he relinquished his only connection to the outside world.

Klaus's lips curled into a cruel smile as he snatched the letter from

Bucky's grasp, his eyes scanning the words with predatory glee.

"Well, well, well," Klaus murmured, his voice dripping with anger as he read the contents of the letter. "Isn't this precious?"

Bucky remained silent, his heart pounding in his chest as he awaited Klaus's next move. He knew that whatever awaited him would be far worse than anything he'd been put through so far.

With a menacing chuckle, Klaus screwed up the letter and threw it on the floor, his gaze never leaving Bucky's.

"You are quite entertaining, my flower," Klaus said, his voice laced with amusement, before turning cold. "But did I say you could write a letter to him, Did you forget that you are mine, boy?" he sneered in contempt.

Bucky's heart raced, looking for any form of escape. Klaus's fists were trembling at his sides.

He was trapped in a room with a predator, and he'd accidentally rung the dinner bell.

Chapter 9: Cracks In The Veil

Chapter Notes

Just a warning guys, this gets pretty dark for Bucky.

Bucky's heart pounded like a drum in his chest as he stood before the General, his eyes widening with fear.

He had seen Klaus angry before, but never like this. There was a darkness in his gaze that sent shivers down Bucky's spine, a possessiveness that made him feel like nothing more than a mere toy in a twisted game.

Bucky looked between the scrunched-up love letter on the floor with his heart poured out on the paper and then back up at Klaus's darkened eyes.

"K-Klaus," Bucky stammered, his voice barely above a whisper as he took a hesitant step backwards, trying to create as much space as possible without the General reacting.

But Klaus was quick to close the distance between them, his hand shooting out to grip Bucky's arm with bruising force, the bones in his wrist feeling like they were going to snap. "You're not going anywhere," Klaus growled, his voice low and menacing as he pulled Bucky closer.

"You belong to me, do you understand?" Bucky's breath caught in his throat as he felt the General's fingers dig into his flesh, the pain shooting through him like a bolt of lightning.

He tried to pull away, to break free from Klaus's grasp, but it was like trying to escape the jaws of a predator.

"Please, Klaus," Bucky pleaded, his voice trembling with fear as he looked up into the General's cold, unyielding gaze. "Let me go. I-I can't take it anymore. It didn't mean anything. I-I don't know what I was thinking."

But Klaus's grip only tightened, his fingers biting into Bucky's skin with a ferocity that made tears spring from Bucky's eyes.

He could feel the General's breath hot against his face, in bursts as Klaus breathed heavily.

"You're mine, Bucky," Klaus snarled, his voice dripping with possessiveness. "Mine to do with as I please. And if you ever try to leave me, I'll make sure you regret it, and there will be nowhere you could hide that I wouldn't find you."

Bucky's heart pounded in his chest as he felt the weight of Klaus's words sink in, a cold dread settling over him.

He had never seen the man like this before, so consumed by rage and jealousy that he seemed almost unrecognisable compared to the monster he'd already met.

With a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, Bucky realized that he was trapped and alone.

And as Klaus's grip tightened even further, Bucky knew that he had never been so scared in his life.

Klaus's eyes blazed with fury as he threw Bucky onto the bed with a force that knocked the breath from his lungs.

Bucky landed with a thud, the impact sending shockwaves of pain radiating through his body, and he felt the wounds on his back open, blood seeping through the bandages.

"Stay there," Klaus spat, his voice low and dangerous as he loomed over Bucky, his face contorted with rage. "You're not going anywhere until I say so."

Bucky scrambled backwards up the bed, his heart racing with fear as he tried to put some distance between himself and Klaus.

But Klaus was quick to close the gap, his hand shooting out to grab Bucky by the collar of his shirt.

"Please, Klaus," Bucky begged, his voice trembling as he looked up at Klaus. "I-I didn't mean to-" But Klaus cut him off with a harsh slap across the face, the force of the blow sending Bucky reeling.

Pain exploded behind his eyes as he tasted blood in his mouth, his cheek stinging with the force of the impact. Bucky brought his hand up to his face, with tears streaming down his cheeks, the heat of the slap burning.

"You dare to defy me?" Klaus growled, his voice low and dangerous, as he grabbed Bucky by the throat, slapping Bucky's hand away, his

fingers digging into the tender flesh, "You belong to me, Bucky. Remember that."

Bucky gasped for air, his vision swimming, as he struggled to break free from Klaus.

But the General held him fast, his fingers like a noose around Bucky's neck as he leant in close, his breath hot against Bucky's skin.

"You're mine," Klaus whispered, his voice a menacing hiss as he pressed his lips to Bucky's ear. "And I'll do whatever it takes to make sure you never forget it."

As Klaus towered over Bucky, his eyes glinted with a dark intensity that froze the blood in Bucky's veins.

With a cruel smirk, Klaus reached for the ropes that were wrapped around the bedhead, his fingers tracing the rough texture with a sadistic delight.

"You need to be reminded of who you belong to," Klaus growled, his voice dripping with malice as he yanked Bucky's arms above his head, stretching him taut against the bedframe.

Bucky's heart pounded in his chest as he bucked against Klaus's touch, the ropes binding him to the bed sending waves of terror coursing through his veins.

He knew what was coming next, and the thought filled him with a bone-deep dread that threatened to consume him whole.

With a swift motion, Klaus pulled Bucky's sweater off and began to bind Bucky's wrists to the bedposts, his movements rough and unforgiving.

Bucky winced as the coarse rope dug into his skin, leaving angry red welts in its wake.

But Klaus was far from finished.

With a grin, he reached for the leather belt coiled around his waist, the metal buckle glinting in the light.

Bucky's breath caught in his throat as Klaus's hand closed around the belt, undoing the buckle and pulling it free, his knuckles white with anticipation.

With a swift flick of his wrist, Klaus brought the belt down across Bucky's chest, the crack of leather against skin echoing through the room like a gunshot.

Bucky cried out in pain as the searing heat of the blow seared through him, leaving behind a trail of fiery agony in its wake.

But Klaus showed no mercy to his cries, raining blow after blow down upon Bucky's body with relentless force.

Each strike left Bucky gasping for breath, his skin burning with the intensity of the pain.

As the onslaught continued, Bucky felt himself slipping further and further into the excruciating storm of pain.

He wanted nothing more than for it to end, for Klaus to release him from this nightmare, and for it to stop.

But Klaus had other plans. With a final, brutal blow, he brought the belt down across Bucky's stomach, the force of the impact sending shockwaves of agony rippling through his body.

Bucky cried out, his voice hoarse with pain, as he struggled against the ropes.

But Klaus only laughed, dragging his fingernails over the bloodied welts, aggravating them more, and Bucky hissed in pain through heaving breaths.

As Bucky lay there, his body wracked with pain and trembling from the abuse, Klaus loomed over him like a dark shadow, his eyes burning with a hunger that sent chills down Bucky's spine.

"You're mine, Bucky," Klaus growled, his voice low and menacing as he traced a finger along the lines of Bucky's trembling form.

"You belong to me, mind, body, and soul."

Bucky's heart pounded in his chest as Klaus's words washed over him, filling him with a bone-deep dread that threatened to suffocate him.

He knew that Klaus was not merely content with breaking his body – he wanted to break his spirit and bend him to his will until there was nothing left of the man he once was.

And worst of all, Bucky knew he was succeeding.

With a cruel smirk, Klaus leant down, his breath hot against Bucky's ear as he whispered dark promises of pain and submission.

Despite the overwhelming fear that threatened to consume him, Bucky refused to surrender to Klaus, even though he knew it was futile.

With a defiant glare, he leant as forward as the ropes would allow and met Klaus's gaze head-on, his eyes burning with fire.

"I'll never belong to you," Bucky spat, his voice filled with a steely resolve that surprised even himself. "No matter what you do to me, I'll never be yours."

Klaus's eyes narrowed at Bucky's defiance, his lips curling into a pleased smile as he leant in closer, his grip tightening on Bucky's chin.

"We'll see about that," Klaus whispered, his voice dripping with amusement as he pressed his lips to Bucky's in a brutal kiss that left him gasping for air.

With a savage growl, Klaus seized Bucky by the throat, his fingers digging into the tender flesh with a force that stole the breath from Bucky's lungs.

Bucky's eyes widened in terror as Klaus's grip tightened, his vision blurring at the edges as he struggled to draw in even the smallest gasp of air.

"Please," Bucky croaked, his voice hoarse. "Let go."

But Klaus was relentless, his grip not faltering as he pushed Bucky into the bed with a strength that bordered on inhuman.

"Never," Klaus snarled. “You're mine, and you'll do as I say."

Bucky's legs thrashed wildly, and his every movement was a desperate bid to break the hold on his throat.

The room spun around him, the walls closing in as Klaus loomed over him, stealing his breath.

"Stop struggling!" Klaus chuckled, his voice cold and unforgiving. "You're only making this harder for yourself."

"Please" Bucky begged, his voice barely a whisper as he fought against the overwhelming tide of pain and the black creeping into the edges of his vision.

But there was no escape from Klaus's grasp, no respite from the agony that tore through him.

Standing up, Klaus grabbed the waistband of his sweatpants and, with a sickening tear, ripped them off Bucky's legs, leaving him exposed to the cold air.

Stripping off his own clothes, he climbed back on the bed and positioned himself between Bucky's legs.

Bucky's mind screamed at him to run as Klaus's cold hands roamed over his trembling body, his every touch making Bucky sick.

With a growl, Klaus gripped his hips and forced himself into Bucky, ignoring his howl of pain as his abused hole was assaulted. Klaus's movements were rough and relentless as he drilled into him with ferocity.

Each thrust felt like a dagger plunging into Bucky's soul, tearing him apart from the inside out.

Bucky's cries of pain were drowned out by Klaus's moans, the sound echoing off the walls and flooding Bucky's senses.

Time seemed to stand still as Klaus dragged out Bucky's agony with sadistic pleasure.

Bucky's body convulsed with each brutal thrust, his world reduced to nothing but pain as Klaus consumed him whole.

Tears streamed down his face, mingling with the sweat and blood that coated his skin.

Klaus grabbed Bucky's legs and forced them up on his shoulders to angle himself deeper into the boy, wrapping his arms behind Bucky's knees to hold him in place and leaning down on top of him.

Klaus bracketed Bucky's face with his hands, forcing him to look into his eyes as he continued to thrust with brutal intensity.

Bucky's gaze met Klaus's, with pain, defiance, and resignation swirling in the depths of his blue eyes.

Their lips crashed together in a violent collision, Klaus biting his lips and tugging in between kisses.

Bucky's mind reeled from the onslaught of sensations, his senses

overwhelmed by the degrading moment.

Klaus's grip on Bucky's jaw tightened, his fingers digging into the tender flesh with a merciless grip as he forced their mouths deeper together in a brutal kiss.

Bucky's lips tingled with the taste of blood, the metallic tang filling his mouth.

Klaus's thrusts grew more frenzied, each movement driving Bucky closer to the brink of oblivion, but nothing prepared him for what Klaus did next.

With a cruel twist, General Klaus ripped the bandage off Bucky's waist, exposing the raw, searing wounds carved into his flesh.

Klaus's fingers dug into the words etched into Bucky's back, tracing the carved lines roughly.

Bucky's scream pierced the air, a primal roar of unadulterated agony that echoed off the walls of the room, mingling with the sickening sound of flesh against flesh.

Bucky's body convulsed with each excruciating touch. The pain was relentless, overwhelming his senses and threatening to consume him whole.

Bucky's screams filled the room, fueling Klaus's twisted desires and making him thrust with a renewed sense of power.

A cruel grin contorted Klaus' face, smearing the blood from Bucky's back over the boy's face, the crimson liquid painting his pretty pale skin crimson.

And then, with a dark hunger burning in his eyes, Klaus brought his bloodied fingers to his lips, sucking the crimson fluid with a perverse pleasure.

The sight sent shivers of revulsion down Bucky's spine, the copper taste of his own blood invading his taste buds.

As Klaus continued to revel in the brutality of his actions, Bucky's world narrowed to nothing.

With each brutal thrust, General Klaus intensified his assault on Bucky's trembling form, his movements fueled by a sadistic desire to

dominate and control.

Bucky's body tensed with each agonising motion, his mind reeling from the onslaught of pain and degradation.

But Klaus, sensing Bucky trying to escape into his own head, wrapped his hand around Bucky's soft cock, stroking it with a forceful grip that elicited a mixture of pleasure and agony, bringing the boy back from his head.

Bucky's breath caught in his throat, a guttural moan escaping his lips despite his best efforts to suppress it.

His body betrayed him, responding to Klaus's touch with shameful arousal as he hardened in the General’s hand.

Each stroke sent waves of conflicting sensations coursing through him, pleasure warring with pain in a twisted dance of agony and ecstasy.

As Klaus forced Bucky's body to react, to betray him in the most intimate of ways, a sense of revulsion washed over him.

He fought against the conflicting emotions, struggling to maintain a shred of dignity in this forced situation.

As Klaus continued his brutal assault, each thrust seemed calculated to inflict maximum pain and pleasure upon Bucky.

With vicious precision, Klaus struck Bucky's prostate, sending a jolt of intense pleasure coursing through his body.

Bucky's horrified gasp was drowned out by a series of involuntary moans that escaped his lips, betraying him in the most humiliating of ways.

The sensation was overwhelming, a cruel reminder of his body's involuntary response to Klaus's violation.

His mind recoiled in horror as his body responded to Klaus's touch, each moan a stab at his already shattered dignity.

He felt as if he were being torn apart from the inside out, the conflicting sensations tearing at his sanity with relentless ferocity.

But Klaus showed no signs of stopping, his movements only growing more intense as he basked in Bucky's vulnerability for his twisted pleasure.

Bucky's mind screamed in protest as his body betrayed him, each thrust sending waves of pleasure coursing through him, despite his desperate attempts to suppress the moans that threatened to escape his lips.

"Mmm... No... Please..." he whimpered, his voice barely audible amidst the heavy breathing and the slapping of skin.

But Klaus heard them and groaned, hips stuttering and his relentless assault driving Bucky to the brink of insanity as he fought to hold back the shameful sounds that threatened to betray him.

"Stop... Don't..." Bucky gasped, his words lost in a chorus of moans that spilt from his lips against his will.

The sense of humiliation was almost unbearable as Klaus's onslaught pushed him closer and closer to the edge of ecstasy, his every instinct screaming for release from the torment that engulfed him.

"Ah... No..." Bucky groaned, his voice hitching with each agonised breath as Klaus's touch sent shockwaves of pleasure coursing through his trembling form.

But try as he might, Bucky couldn't silence the moans that escaped him, each one his body's betrayal in the face of Klaus.

The room was filled with the sounds of their ragged breaths and the rhythmic pounding of their bodies, locked in a brutal dance of domination and submission.

As Klaus's thrusts grew more frenzied, driving Bucky to the brink of oblivion, a primal instinct took hold of them both, driving them towards release.

With a guttural cry, Klaus emptied himself into Bucky, his hips stuttering.

Bucky's climax followed soon after, a wave of humiliation crashing over him as he surrendered to the pleasure and pain that engulfed him.

His body convulsed with the force of his release, every muscle in his body tensing.

Tears streamed down his face unchecked, his body wracked with tremors of shame and the fading tingles of his climax.

With a gut-wrenching scream of anger, Bucky threw his head back, his voice echoing off the walls in a raw display of rage and frustration. He screamed at himself for the weakness that had allowed Klaus to break him and for the betrayal of his own body.

Amidst his sobs and screams of anger, Bucky's voice cracked as he struggled to articulate his overwhelming emotions.

"Why?" he choked out, his voice thick with tears. "Why did you have to break me like this?"

His words were desperate, a cry for answers that would never come.

Klaus remained silent, watching Bucky throw his tantrum.

"I hate you!" Bucky screamed, his voice raw with fury and despair. "I hate what you've done to me!"

Klaus' silence was a cruel reminder of the power he held over Bucky's shattered spirit.

As Bucky's cries echoed off the walls, he felt a profound sense of defeat wash over him, the weight of Klaus's body crushing him beneath its suffocating embrace.

With a chilling grin, General Klaus leant down towards Bucky, his breath hot against the boy's ear as he whispered, "I win, my little flower."

Bucky shuddered at the sound of Klaus's voice, his body recoiling from the cruel words that dripped with triumph.

He felt a revulsion wash over him as Klaus licked up the sweat and blood from his throat, a final act of power before releasing him.

As Klaus slid out of him and undid his wrists, Bucky curled in on himself, a shattered shell of the person he once was.

“I hate you, I hate you so much." Bucky mumbled against the pillow, his back towards Klaus.

“You’ll learn not too,” and with a cold detachment, Klaus walked over to his clothes, pulled them on, and walked out of the room, leaving Bucky alone in the bed.

And as the door closed behind him, Bucky's heart filled with a sense of emptiness, a void that seemed to stretch on into eternity.

Bucky slowly turned over and reached down to pick up the forgotten scrunched letter, tucking it safely between the mattress and bed frame.

With trembling hands, Bucky gingerly touched the raw and bloodied wounds that marred his lower back, each touch sending waves of pain radiating through his body.

Tears streamed down his cheeks as he pressed his face into the pillow, muffling his sobs.

In the bed of their drying sweat, cum, and blood, Bucky whispered prayers for death to find him, for the torment to finally come to an end as he finally succumbed to the darkness.

Chapter 10: In the Shadow of Death

Chapter Notes

Warning - Background character death.

As the first light of dawn painted the sky, the men emerged from their barracks, their tired and weary eyes scanning the horizon. But as they looked out across the campgrounds, a collective gasp escaped their lips, freezing them in their tracks.

There, hanging from a solitary post at the gates of the camp, was the lifeless body of the German soldier who had run in with Buck the day before. His limp, blood-soaked form swayed gently in the morning breeze, a haunting silhouette against the backdrop of the rising sun.

Shock rippled through the ranks of prisoners as they beheld the grisly sight before them. Some turned away, others stood back and laughed, while others watched in stunned silence.

Buck's eyes widened in disbelief as they fell upon the gory scene at the gates. His heart hammered in his chest, a mix of conflicting emotions churning within him. On one hand, there was a sense of satisfaction, a vindication that the man who had spoken of Bucky like he was trash now hung lifeless before them.

But beneath that fleeting sense of triumph lay a deeper unease, a gnawing fear that clawed at the edges of his mind. Why would the General resort to such extreme measures as killing one of his own men and displaying his body for all to see?

Brady approached Buck, his expression grave as he surveyed the scene before them. "Buck," he said softly, his voice tinged with concern, "Is that... Is that the soldier who told you about the General and Bucky yesterday?"

Buck nodded grimly, his jaw set. "Yeah, that's him," he replied, his voice tight. "General Klaus didn't take too kindly to his loose lips."

Brady's gaze darkened as he took in the sight of the hanging soldier. "Damn," he muttered under his breath, wiping his hand over his mouth. "It looks like the bastard was put through the wringer. That's disgusting."

Silence hung heavy between them as they watched the grisly spectacle unfold before their eyes. The reality of the situation weighed heavily on their shoulders, a reminder of the dangers that lurked within the confines of the camp.

Not even the General's own men were spared.

Buck's laughter echoed hollowly across the silent grounds, a bitter sound tinged with disbelief and amusement. As he stared at the lifeless form of the German soldier, a surge of conflicting emotions roiled within him.

"Heh," Buck scoffed bitterly, his voice thick. "All that smugness, all that high and mighty attitude and respect for his General... and he still ended up dead by his idol's hands anyway."

Beside him, Brady placed a hand on Buck's shoulder, his expression sombre.

"It's not worth it, Buck," Brady said quietly, his voice a calming presence amidst Buck's turmoil. "Violence only begets more violence. We can't let ourselves become like them."

But Buck shook his head, his fists clenched at his sides. "He deserved it, Brady," he growled, his voice raw with emotion. "He deserved to pay for what he said."

Brady's grip tightened on Buck's shoulder, his gaze steady. "I know, Buck," he said softly. "But we can't let the General win. We have to keep our heads down now more than ever, bide our time, and wait for the right moment to strike. This is a clear message to everyone that he's watching and listening. We can't afford to make mistakes."

As Buck struggled to contain the storm of emotions raging within him, he nodded reluctantly. "You're right, Brady," he muttered, his voice heavy with resignation. "I just... I can't stand the thought of Bucky out there, suffering at the hands of General Klaus. If he's doing this to his own soldiers, then what is he doing to Bucky?"

With a heavy heart, Buck turned away from the scene before him, his resolve wavering. As Buck turned away, the weight of uncertainty bore down on him. The image of Bucky, battered and broken, haunted his every thought, driving him to the brink of desperation.

"We have to do something," Buck muttered, his voice barely audible above the whisper of the wind. "We can't just sit back and wait for

Klaus to strike again. Bucky needs us."

Brady's gaze softened, his expression filled with empathy. "I know, Buck," he said, his tone gentle. "But we have to be smart about this. We can't rush into anything blindly. We need a plan."

Buck nodded, his jaw clenched in frustration. "I know," he admitted, his voice tinged with resignation. "But every moment we waste, Bucky suffers. We can't afford to wait any longer."

Brady placed a reassuring hand on Buck's shoulder; his touch was a silent reminder of their shared resolve. "We'll find a way, Buck," he said, his voice firm with determination. "I promise. But we have to be patient."

With a heavy sigh, Buck nodded, his heart heavy with the weight of uncertainty.

Bucky sat alone in Klaus's sleeping quarters, his eyes darting around nervously as he took in the opulent surroundings. Having been bought in here half an hour earlier, under the orders of the General.

The air felt heavy, and Bucky couldn't shake the feeling of unease that settled in the pit of his stomach. He was trapped in here, with no explanation.

Hours passed, each one stretching out into an eternity as Bucky waited alone in the room. He'd given up on looking for anything to use that he could defend himself with; it appeared to have been cleared of anything that could be weaponized already.

Every creak of the floorboards and rustle of fabric made him jump, his senses on high alert for any sign of Klaus's return. The only upside was that the room was a lot warmer than anything he'd been in for months, and he'd found a shirt and a pair of pants in the drawers.

Finally, an hour later, after playing through baseball games in his head, the door swung open with a resounding creak, and Klaus strode into the room with a swagger that made Bucky's skin crawl. Blood stained his fists, and it was splattered across his shirt—a gruesome display of violence that sent shivers down Bucky's spine.

Bucky instinctively retreated, pressing himself against the farthest wall as Klaus paid him no mind, heading straight for the bathroom to wash

up.

As Klaus began to clean himself off, Bucky's voice trembled as he dared to speak. "Who's blood is that?" he asked, his voice barely above a whisper, fear gnawing at his insides.

Klaus glanced at him from where he stood, a smirk playing at the corners of his lips. "I took a little trip to your camp," he replied nonchalantly, "and dealt with some business there."

Bucky's blood ran cold at Klaus's words, his heart pounding in his chest.

"Whose is it?" he asked again, his voice trembling with dread.

The General chuckled darkly, the sound sending shivers down Bucky's spine. "Don't you worry your pretty little head, my flower," he said, his tone dripping with annoyance. "It's not his. It's one of my men whose lips and tongue were loose, so I removed them for him."

Bucky's breath caught in his throat, his hands shaking uncontrollably as the full weight of Klaus's brutality settled over him. He felt sick to his stomach, the realisation sinking in that he was trapped with a monster who showed no mercy to those who crossed him, not even his own.

"Why?" Bucky's voice quivered with a mixture of fear and disbelief as he dared to pose the question, his eyes fixed on Klaus.

Klaus paused in his movements, turning to face Bucky with a predatory glint in his eyes. "Why?" he echoed, a cold smile tugging at the corners of his lips. "Because they disobeyed me."

He listened in horror as Klaus spoke calmly, his tone chillingly detached, as if discussing the weather.

Bucky swallowed hard, the lump in his throat growing with each passing moment. He could feel the weight of Klaus's gaze bearing down on him, a silent threat hanging in the air like a storm cloud ready to burst any second.

"They thought they could undermine me," Klaus continued, his voice low and menacing. "But they quickly learned the consequences of their actions."

Bucky's mind raced, his thoughts spinning in a dizzying whirlwind of

horror and disbelief. He couldn't fathom the depths of Klaus's cruelty, the callous disregard for human life that dripped from his every word.

"And what about me?" Bucky's voice wavered, the words tumbling from his lips before he could stop them. "What happens if I disobey you again?"
Klaus's smile widened, his eyes gleaming with something dark.

"Oh, my dear flower," he purred, stalking closer until he was mere inches away, his breath hot against Bucky's skin. "You don't want to find out."

"He fed information to your buddy, by the way," Klaus continued. "And I specifically ordered my men not to mention you in that camp anymore."

Bucky's mind reeled at the revelation, his thoughts swirling in a maelstrom of confusion and dread. He felt a surge of guilt wash over him, knowing that the mere mention of his name had put others in danger in that camp, what if it wasn't only Klaus' men that he didn't want talking about him? What had the soldier told Buck? Was Buck now in danger too?

Klaus's touch on his curls sent a shiver down Bucky's spine bringing him out of his thoughts, fingers threading through Bucky's hair with a disturbing tenderness that made Bucky's skin crawl.

Bucky dared not to move, his body rigid with fear as Klaus's words hung in the air like a dark cloud. He knew then, with sickening certainty, that man was delusional.

As Klaus's fingers lingered in Bucky's hair, there was a flicker of something in his eyes before it disappeared.

Klaus's lips curled into a predatory smile, his eyes gleaming with a dangerous intensity as he leant in closer, his breath hot against Bucky's trembling lips.

"Now come," Klaus murmured, his voice dripping with menace. "We both need a shower. And if you get any funny ideas, then I'll go back to the camp, and I'll bring your friend's head back as a souvenir. Do you understand me?"

"Yes," Bucky managed to choke out, his voice barely above a whisper. "I understand." Bucky's heart hammered in his chest as he stared into Klaus's eyes.

He knew that he had no choice but to obey and submit to Klaus's will if he had any hope of surviving.

With a nod, Bucky followed Klaus into the bathroom, trying to contain the panic that was building in his chest.

As Klaus stood there, eyes raking over Bucky, a cold shiver ran down Bucky's spine.

"Strip" Klaus commanded, his voice a low growl that sent a chill down Bucky's spine. "I want to see all of you."

Bucky's breath caught in his throat, his heart pounding in his chest as he hesitated for a moment, Klaus's demand sinking in. But with a sense of resignation, he began to comply, his hands moving to the buttons of his shirt with trembling fingers.

Each button seemed to take an eternity to undo, the sound of fabric sliding against fabric echoing in the silence. Bucky could feel Klaus's eyes on him, boring into him like hot coals, stripping away the layers of his defences until he felt utterly exposed.

With a final, desperate tug, Bucky carefully peeled the shirt away from his skin, mindful of his back, his chest rising and falling with each ragged breath. He felt vulnerable and exposed, as if every flaw and imperfection were on display for Klaus's inspection.

Klaus's eyes roamed over Bucky's trembling form with a hunger that made Bucky's skin crawl, his lips curling into a pleaser smile as he took in the sight before him. It was as if Klaus were savouring the moment, revelling in the power he held over Bucky's body and soul.

"Good," Klaus murmured, his voice sending shivers down Bucky's spine as he ran his hand down Bucky's chest before resting on the waistband of his trousers. "Now the rest."

With a sense of resignation, Bucky reached for the waistband of his trousers, his fingers fumbling with the fabric as he worked to free himself from their confines.

Each movement felt like a betrayal, a surrender to Klaus's dominance that left Bucky feeling more exposed than ever.

With a steely resolve, Bucky peeled away the last vestiges of his dignity, standing before Klaus in nothing but his skin. He felt exposed, vulnerable, but he refused to let Klaus see the fear that churned in his

gut.

Klaus's touch sent a ripple of apprehension coursing through Bucky's body, his muscles tensing beneath Klaus's wandering hands.

He braced himself for the inevitable pain, steeling his resolve as Klaus's fingers trailed down his abdomen, tracing the contours of his lean physique.

"Good," Klaus murmured, his voice a low rumble of approval. "So perfect."

Bucky's heart raced as Klaus's tone shifted from a monster to something softer in the blink of an eye.

He couldn't predict the man's mood and couldn't decipher the intentions behind his words. It left him high-strung and on edge, never knowing what might set Klaus off next.

He said nothing, his jaw clenched in silent defiance as Klaus's fingers danced over his skin. He refused to give Klaus the satisfaction of a response, his gaze fixed on a distant point on the wall as he endured Klaus's invasive inspection.

But when Klaus's fingers reached the bandages around his waist, Bucky couldn't suppress the involuntary flinch that rippled through him. He cursed himself for his weakness, his heart hammering in his chest as he waited for Klaus's inevitable retaliation.

And as he expected, his touch became rougher, his grip tightening on Bucky's hips as he forced him to turn around.

Bucky winced as Klaus's fingers probed the wounds on his back, his touch harsh and unforgiving.

"You flinched," Klaus observed, his voice deceptively calm. "Why?"

Bucky's breath caught in his throat, his mind racing as he struggled to come up with a plausible excuse. He couldn't let Klaus see the fear that he churned within him; he couldn't give him the satisfaction of knowing how much power he truly held over him.

"It was nothing," Bucky replied, his voice barely above a whisper. "Just a reflex."

But Klaus's gaze bore into him, piercing through the facade of

indifference that Bucky had carefully constructed. He could see the doubt flickering in Klaus's eyes and the faintest hint of amusement playing at the corners of his lips.

"Is that so?" Klaus murmured, his voice laced with scepticism. "Or perhaps you're scared, my little flower?"

Bucky's heart hammered in his chest, his breath coming in short, ragged gasps as he struggled to maintain his composure. He knew he was walking a dangerous line, teetering on the edge of Klaus's episodes, but he refused to back down.

"I'm not afraid of you," Bucky declared, his voice trembling with false bravado.

Klaus's lips curled into a sinister smile, his eyes gleaming with a dangerous light as he leant in closer, his breath hot against Bucky's trembling lips.

"We'll see about that," Klaus murmured his voice a low growl that sent a shiver down Bucky's spine. "We'll see."

As Klaus continued his examination, his touch gradually softened again, his fingers tracing the contours of Bucky's lower back with a surprising gentleness.

Bucky's muscles relaxed slightly, a flicker of relief coursing through him as Klaus's demeanour shifted once more.

"You've been through a lot, my flower," Klaus said, his voice tinged with unexpected softness. "But I promise you, I'll take care of you. No harm will come to you while you're under my protection, unless by my hands."

He couldn't shake the feeling of unease that lingered beneath the surface, but for now, he allowed himself to bask in the fleeting moments of kindness Klaus showed him.

Klaus's grip tightened on Bucky's ass as he lifted him onto the sink, positioning himself between Bucky's legs.

With a calculated calmness, he retrieved a shaving blade from his pocket and foam from the sink. He lathered Bucky's growing facial hair, the sharp scent of shaving cream filling the air.

Bucky's eyes darted nervously between the blade and Klaus, his fear

palpable in the tense lines of his body. He swallowed hard, his throat dry with apprehension, as Klaus chuckled darkly, his amusement sending a shiver down Bucky's spine.

"I'm going to give you a shave, little flower," Klaus murmured, his voice dripping with menace. "If you don't try anything, then you'll be fine."

Bucky nodded stiffly, his muscles taut with tension as he forced himself to remain still. He knew better than to provoke Klaus. He knew the consequences of it all too well. So he sat frozen, his breath shallow and ragged as Klaus cradled his face in his hands.

Closing his eyes, Bucky braced himself for the inevitable, his heart pounding in his chest as Klaus brought the blade to his skin. He felt the cold metal against his cheek, the sharp edge hovering dangerously close to his jugular.

But to Bucky's surprise, Klaus's touch was surprisingly gentle, his movements precise and controlled as he shaved away the stubble with practiced skill.

Bucky held his breath, his body rigid with anticipation, as Klaus worked, each stroke of the blade a silent reminder of the power imbalance between them.

As Klaus ran the blade carefully over Bucky's jawline, he spoke idly about inconsequential things—the weather, the latest news from the front lines—anything to fill the silence that hung heavy between them.

But Bucky's mind was elsewhere, his thoughts consumed by the sight of another man's blood staining Klaus's shirt, the metallic scent lingering in the air, so close he could almost taste the copper.

Bucky struggled to keep still, his body tensing involuntarily as Klaus's touch grazed his skin.

Every fibre of his being screamed at him to run, to fight, to do anything to escape the clutches of the man standing before him. But with the blade so close to his throat, he knew that any sudden movement would be a death wish.

Sensing the turmoil brewing within Bucky, Klaus's brows furrowed in frustration, his grip tightening on Bucky's chin as he continued to shave him. "What's wrong with you, my little flower?" he growled, his

voice low and dangerous.

Bucky's heart raced, panic bubbling up within him as he struggled to come up with a plausible explanation. "It's just..." he stammered, his voice trembling with fear. "It's just that... you're still covered in blood."

Klaus paused, his expression darkening with anger as he turned to face Bucky fully. "And?" he hissed, his eyes narrowing.

Bucky swallowed hard, his throat constricting with fear as he hastily backtracked, his mind racing to salvage the situation. "I mean... I mean, I'm just... worried about you," he lied, his voice barely above a whisper. "I don't want you to... to get hurt, that…what if it's not just …his."

Klaus's gaze bore into him, searching for any sign of deception, but Bucky held his breath, his heart pounding in his chest as he waited for Klaus's response.

After a tense moment, Klaus's expression softened slightly, a flicker of something akin to approval crossing his features.

"You worry too much, my little flower," Klaus said dismissively, his tone lighter than before. "But I appreciate your concern. Now, hold still. We're almost done here."

Bucky nodded silently, his mind reeling with relief as Klaus resumed his task, his thoughts consumed by the narrow escape he had just made. He knew that he had dodged a bullet, at least for now, but he couldn't shake the feeling that something was going to happen still. He was too unpredictable.

After finishing shaving Bucky's face, Klaus lifted him off the bench with a firm grip, his touch sending a shiver down Bucky's spine.

"Wait here," Klaus commanded, turning the shower on, his tone brooking no argument as he disappeared from the bathroom, taking the blade with him.

Bucky listened intently as Klaus's voice drifted in from outside, followed by the sound of him exchanging words with one of the men stationed nearby. His heart raced with trepidation, and his mind was racing with thoughts of what Klaus might do next.

True to his word, Klaus returned moments later, his clothes discarded and his chest sticky with dried blood.

"Get in," he ordered, his voice firm as he gestured to the shower.

Bucky obeyed silently, his movements stiff with fear as he stepped into the shower, the water cascading over him in a torrent of heat and steam.

Klaus followed suit, stepping behind Bucky as he reached for the soap, his hands moving with a deliberate slowness that made Bucky's skin crawl.

As Klaus washed the blood from his body, Bucky's eyes flickered nervously between Klaus's naked form and the door, his mind racing with thoughts of escape.

But before he could formulate a plan, Klaus's voice cut through the silence, his tone commanding.

"Kneel," Klaus ordered, his voice sending a shiver down Bucky's spine as he sank to his knees on the tiled floor.

With a predatory gleam in his eyes, Klaus began to wash Bucky's hair, his touch surprisingly gentle as he worked the soap into Bucky's scalp.

Bucky closed his eyes, trying to block out the sensation, but Klaus's proximity was suffocating as he towered over Bucky.

And then, without warning, Klaus's demeanour shifted, his touch becoming rough and demanding as he pulled Bucky closer, his fingers tangling in Bucky's hair as he forced Bucky's head towards his growing cock.

Bucky's heart pounded in his chest as Klaus thrust into his mouth with a savage intensity, pinning Bucky against the wall with a strength that left him breathless.

He struggled to keep up, his hands grasping desperately at Klaus's thighs as he fought to breathe through the onslaught and the steam.

But Klaus showed no mercy. His movements were relentless as he drove Bucky to the brink of desperation.

Bucky felt his resolve crumbling, his world narrowing to the sensation of Klaus's touch and the overpowering scent of soap and remnants of copper that filled the air.

As Klaus thrust into Bucky's mouth with a ferocity that bordered on

brutality, he voiced his pleasure in a twisted symphony of praise and belittling.

"Such a good boy," Klaus growled, his voice low and guttural with desire. "So eager to please."

Bucky gagged around Klaus's length, the sound muffled by the force of Klaus's hips snapping. He struggled to keep up, his head spinning as Klaus's words washed over him like a tidal wave.

"You're doing so well," Klaus murmured, his voice tinged with admiration. "So obedient."

Bucky's cheeks burned with shame at Klaus's words, his body smacking against the tiles with the force of Klaus fucking his mouth.

He felt like a puppet on strings, manipulated and controlled by Klaus's every whim.

"It feels so good," Klaus groaned, his voice thick with lust as he drove himself deeper into Bucky's mouth. "You have no idea."

Bucky choked back a sob, his throat raw and sore from Klaus's relentless assault. He wanted nothing more than to push Klaus away, to escape the suffocating grip of Klaus's desire.

But as Klaus's climax approached, Bucky knew that resistance was futile. He closed his eyes, blocking out the world around him as he surrendered to Klaus's will, his body nothing more than a vessel for Klaus's pleasure.

Klaus’s grip tightened, his fingers digging into Bucky's scalp with a bruising force that left Bucky reeling. With one final thrust, Klaus shot down the back of Bucky's throat, his breath coming in ragged gasps as he pulled away from Bucky, leaving him kneeling on the tiles, shaken and exhausted.

As Klaus pulled Bucky up from the shower floor, his grip was surprisingly gentle, and his touch was almost tender as he praised Bucky for being a good boy.

"You did well, my little flower," Klaus murmured, his voice a soothing rumble against Bucky's ear. "Such a good boy."

Bucky stood there numb, his body limp and heavy with exhaustion, allowing Klaus to manoeuvre him around as he washed Bucky's body.

"Don’t," Bucky whispered, his voice barely above a whisper as he struggled to keep his eyes open.

The warm water cascaded over Bucky's skin, soothing his aching muscles and washing away the traces of blood and sweat that clung to him. Bucky sagged back against Klaus' chest, his body too tired to hold himself up anymore.

But despite the comforting sensation of the water, Bucky felt numb and disconnected as Klaus guided him through the motions, being gentle enough not to aggrivate his bruises.

He spaced out as Klaus moved them out of the shower, his mind drifting to a distant place as Klaus dried him off, replaced his bandages and pulled him onto the bed next to him.

"Easy now," Klaus said gently, his voice a steady presence amid Bucky's foggy thoughts.

"You're safe here, my flower."

Bucky's limbs felt like lead weights, his eyelids drooping with fatigue as he struggled to stay awake.

Klaus wrapped his arms around Bucky, his warmth a comforting and unwanted presence against Bucky's trembling form. "Just rest now. Shh, just sleep, flower," Klaus soothed.

Bucky fought against the overwhelming urge to surrender to sleep. He felt so disoriented.

But as Klaus held him close, murmuring soft words of reassurance, Bucky's body betrayed him, and he succumbed to exhaustion, dragging him down into the depths of unconsciousness.

Klaus smirked, holding the sleeping boy against his chest, a glint in his eyes.

There was a long way to go with making Bucky completely surrender to him, but one look at the boy confirmed what Klaus already knew—he was worth it, and Klaus would stop at nothing to break him down completely until the boy could see he was doing what's best for him, that he could take care of him and give him what he needs like no one else could.

As he watched Bucky's peaceful slumber, Klaus's mind churned with

plans and schemes, each one more extreme than the last.

He relished the challenge of unravelling Bucky's defences and tearing down the walls he had built.

Klaus leant down and tucked his nose in against Bucky's hair, breathing in deeply. 'Beautiful. Perfect. Mine. Mine. Mine.' ran through his head as he tightened his hold on Bucky, his grip possessive.

With a final smirk, Klaus settled in for the night, his arms wrapping around his boy and pulling him as close as possible. Mind already whirring with plans for the days to come. He was determined to make Bucky his. Mind, body, and soul, and nothing and no one would stand in his way.

Chapter 11: A Dance of Dominance

Bucky's heart pounded in his chest as he slowly woke up, the weight of Klaus's body pressing against his back. Panic surged through him as he carefully peeked over his shoulder, his breath catching in his throat at the sight of Klaus's face mere inches from him.

With trembling hands, Bucky tried to put some space between them, carefully removing Klaus's arms from his waist until the man was lying on his back, still asleep.

As Bucky sat up, his mind raced with thoughts of escape and Buck. He glanced at Klaus, his gaze lingering on the man's sleeping form as he contemplated his next move.

Killing Klaus seemed like the only option, the only way to ensure his safety and freedom.

Bucky's eyes darted around the room, searching for anything he could use as a weapon. But to his dismay, he found nothing—no sharp objects, no heavy objects, nothing that could help him in his desperate bid for freedom.

With his decision made, Bucky got to his hands and knees, his muscles coiled with tension as he crept closer to Klaus. He knew this was his only chance—his one shot at escaping the clutches of the man who had taken everything from him.

Throwing caution to the wind, Bucky climbed on top of Klaus, his hands wrapping around the man's thick throat with a desperate strength he didn't know he possessed. Adrenaline surged through his veins as he squeezed with everything he had, and his mind focused on getting back to Buck. And right now, this seemed like the only way.

But Klaus was no ordinary adversary. He was much larger and stronger than Bucky was, so as soon as he woke up, he fought back with a ferocity that shouldn't have taken Bucky by surprise but it still did.

Klaus jolted awake to the sensation of Bucky's hands closing around his throat, the boy's fingers digging into his flesh with a desperate ferocity. Anger surged through Klaus as he grappled with Bucky, his own hands clawing at the boy's wrists to pry them away.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?” Klaus growled, his voice thick with rage as he fought to catch his breath.

"Fuck you!" Bucky hissed, trying like all hell to kill the man underneath him.

Bucky’s eyes blazed with wild intensity as he struggled against Klaus’s hold, his muscles tense with the effort of trying to overpower the man.

With a snarl, Klaus summoned all his strength and hurled Bucky across the room, the force of the impact sending him crashing into the wall with a sickening thud. Bucky’s body convulsed with pain as he struggled to regain his bearings, his vision swimming with stars as he fought to stay conscious.

“Stay down, you fool,” Klaus growled, his voice a menacing rumble that echoed through the room. “You don’t stand a chance against me.”

But Bucky refused to heed Klaus’ warning, his determination unshaken as he pushed himself to his feet, his muscles screaming in protest with every movement.

Klaus’s eyes narrowed with annoyance at Bucky as he rubbed his throat. He had warned Bucky of the consequences of his disobedience. He'd shown him time and time again that resistance was futile.

But Bucky was already in too deep to turn back now, his resolve unwavering as he launched himself at Klaus with a recklessness that bordered on desperation and madness.

The room crackled with tension as Bucky charged at Klaus, his fists ready and fire blazing in his eyes. Klaus braced himself for the onslaught, his muscles coiled with a readiness born of years of training and experience.

As they collided, the sound of their struggle echoed off the walls, the air thick with the scent of sweat and blood. Bucky fought with reckless abandon, throwing punches and kicks with wild eyes, while Klaus moved with calculated precision, deflecting each blow with ease.

But despite Klaus’s efforts to hold back and restrain his full strength, Bucky still felt the sting of each blow, the impact reverberating through his body with a painful intensity.

He gritted his teeth against the pain, refusing to back down even as

bruises bloomed on his skin, felt the blood dripping down his face and his muscles screaming in protest.

“Stop fighting, Flower,” Klaus growled, his voice a low rumble of warning as he deflected another punch with a swift block.

Bucky paid him no heed. His mind was consumed with the burning desire to break free from Klaus’ hold once and for all. He threw himself into the fray with a ferocity born of desperation.

With each minute, the struggle grew more intense, the room filling with the sound of grunts and curses as Bucky and Klaus battled for dominance. But despite his best efforts, Bucky found himself outmatched, his strength waning against Klaus's.

Finally, with one last surge of energy, Klaus delivered a finishing blow, sending Bucky reeling backwards with a grunt of pain. Bucky stumbled, his vision swimming as he fought to stay upright, but Klaus was unforgiving.

As the world spun around him, Bucky realised the futility of his efforts and the sheer impossibility of overcoming Klaus’s strength and skill.

With a swift and decisive movement, Klaus lunged forward, overpowering Bucky and pinning him down onto the bed. Bucky struggled beneath Klaus’ weight, his muscles straining against the strong arms holding him in place. But Klaus’s grip was firm and unmoveable, which left Bucky powerless to resist.

“No more fighting, Flower,” Klaus commanded, his voice a low rumble as he held Bucky firmly in place. “You’ve pushed your luck far enough.”

Bucky’s protests fell on deaf ears as Klaus maintained his hold, his gaze unforgiving as he stared down at the boy beneath him. With a resigned sigh, Bucky ceased his struggles, his body going limp beneath Klaus’s restraining grasp.

"Klaus..." Bucky's voice trembled, a hint of fear lingering in the air.

Defeated, Bucky lay there beneath Klaus’s weight, his breaths coming in ragged gasps as he resigned himself to his fate. At that moment, he knew that he had lost and had no choice but to submit to Klaus’ will, to endure whatever punishment awaited him with a silent acceptance.

Klaus straddled Bucky’s waist, pinning his arms above his head. He

surveyed the damage he had inflicted on the boy beneath him.

Bucky's chest heaved with exertion, and his face contorted in pain and fear as he met Klaus's gaze.

"You fought well, Bucky," Klaus remarked, his voice laced with a hint of amusement as he observed the bruises and cuts adorning Bucky's battered frame. "But you're no match for me."

Bucky's heart sank at Klaus's words, the weight of defeat settling heavily upon him. He had fought with all his strength, but it had been futile against Klaus's overwhelming power.

"I'm sorry," Bucky whispered, his voice barely above a hoarse murmur as he struggled to find the words to explain himself.

Klaus's expression softened slightly at the apology, a flicker of something resembling pity crossing his features before he masked it with indifference.

"Apologies won't change anything," Klaus replied, his tone cold and dismissive. "You disobeyed me, and now you must face the consequences, my dear boy."

Bucky's heart hammered in his chest, a sense of dread pooling in the pit of his stomach as he awaited Klaus's next move. He knew that whatever punishment Klaus had in store for him would be excruciating, and he was terrified now more than ever. He had fucked up.

As Klaus leant in closer, his breath hot against Bucky's ear, a shiver ran down Bucky's spine at the palpable menace in his voice.

"You'll learn to obey me, Bucky," Klaus murmured, his tone dark and foreboding. "One way or another."

Bucky gritted his teeth, his eyes flashing with an intensity that matched Klaus's own. "I'll never submit to you," he whispered, before looking away from Klaus.

Klaus's smirk widened into a predatory grin, his fingers trailing down Bucky's cheek in a mocking caress. "We'll see about that," he purred, his tone filled with sinister promise.

Bucky's rebellious nature sparked a flicker of amusement in Klaus's eyes, his lips curling into a smirk as he relished the challenge before

him.

"You're a stubborn one, aren't you?" Klaus remarked, his voice dripping with a mixture of amusement. "But mark my words, Bucky. You will submit to me, whether you like it or not."

As Klaus wiped away the blood from Bucky's face, his fingers tracing the contours of his bruises with possessive fervour, Bucky couldn't help but shudder at the sensation.

“You’re a mess, Flower,” Klaus remarked with a dark chuckle, his voice laced with amusement as he surveyed the blood adorning Bucky’s battered face. “But you’ll clean up nicely.”

It was as if Klaus were claiming him, marking him as his own in the most primal of ways. His touch was rough yet oddly tender, the juxtaposition sending a shiver down Bucky’s spine as he tried to suppress the instinctual urge to flinch away.

Bucky said nothing, his jaw clenched in silent defiance as Klaus leant in closer, his lips crashing against Bucky’s split lip in a brutal kiss. Bucky winced at the sting of pain, his body protesting against the roughness of Klaus’s touch.

Klaus’s tongue darted out to lap up the blood, his movements possessive and predatory as he claimed Bucky’s lips as his own. Bucky’s mind reeled at the intensity of the kiss, his senses overwhelmed by the raw power Klaus exuded.

When Klaus finally released him, a triumphant smirk playing at his blood-stained lips, Bucky felt a surge of defiance rise within him. But before he could voice his protest, Klaus's fingers closed around his cheeks, forcing him to meet his gaze.

"Look at me, darling," Klaus commanded, his voice a low growl that left no room for argument. "Look at me and remember who you belong to."

Bucky gritted his teeth, his jaw clenched, but Klaus's grip was unyielding. With a surge of frustration, Bucky finally met Klaus's gaze, his eyes burning with anger and fear.

Klaus's smirk widened at Bucky's submission. "That's it, my little flower," he murmured, his tone dripping with satisfaction. "You belong to me, mind, body, and soul."

Bucky's lips curled into a sneer, but Klaus's fingers tightened their grip, a silent warning against further resistance. Unable to break free, Bucky could only seethe with frustration as Klaus refused to let him go.

"Stay still," Klaus commanded, his voice low, in a warning growl that echoed in the tense silence of the room. His fingers traced a path down Bucky's trembling form, leaving goosebumps in their wake as they reached for the waistband of his boxers.

Bucky winced at the pressure, his body tensing with the force of Klaus's hold. "Please, Klaus, everything hurts," he pleaded, his voice choked with panic.

But Klaus paid no heed to his pleas, his touch rough and relentless as he stripped away the last vestiges of Bucky's dignity. Each movement was calculated and methodical as if Klaus were determined to erase any trace of defiance from Bucky's shattered spirit.

Despite his best efforts to fight back, Bucky weakened under Klaus' hands. His muscles, once tense with adrenaline, now went slack, unable to withstand the impossible force of Klaus's dominance. With every touch, every bruising grip, Klaus chipped away at Bucky's resolve, leaving him feeling exposed and vulnerable.

Klaus's touch was rough and invasive as he prepared Bucky for what was to come. With calloused hands, he spread Bucky's trembling thighs apart, his fingers tracing a path of fire along the sensitive skin of his inner thighs.

Bucky's breath caught in his throat as Klaus's touch sent shivers of anticipation coursing through him. He knew what was coming and even dreaded it, but he was powerless to resist Klaus's relentless advances.

"Please, Klaus," Bucky pleaded, his voice barely above a whisper as Klaus's fingers trailed closer and closer to his core. "I can't..."

But Klaus paid no heed to his protests, his touch craving as he continued his exploration. With each caress, he pushed Bucky further and further to the edge, until he could deny him no longer.

Bucky's cry echoed through the room, a sharp exclamation of pain as Klaus entered him with deliberate slowness. His voice was laced with anguish, a desperate plea for mercy as he struggled to endure the assault on his body.

"Ow! ow! please, Klaus, stop!" Bucky begged, his words choked with pain and desperation. Each syllable was a testament to the agony coursing through him as Klaus's slow thrusts sent waves of pain rippling through his body.

But Klaus remained unmoved by Bucky's pleas, his movements steady and relentless as he claimed ownership over Bucky's body. Each thrust was a cruel reminder of the power he held, a brutal assertion of his dominance over the helpless boy beneath him.

"Please, Klaus. You're hurting me." Bucky pleaded, his voice strained with agony as he pushed against Klaus' chest and shoulders in futile resistance. Tears welled in Bucky's eyes, his chest heaving with the effort to stifle his cries as Klaus's relentless assault on his abused ass continued.

"Trust me, darling," Klaus urged, his tone soothing yet commanding. "I know what's best for you. Just breathe. I promise it won't hurt if you just relax and let me in..."

Weakened and defeated, Bucky could do nothing but submit to Klaus's will, his body a mere puppet in the hands of a master manipulator. His limbs felt heavy, and his movements were sluggish as Klaus continued to assert his control over him.

Klaus's fingers tightened around his face, a stark reminder of who held the power at that moment. Despite the flickering fire in his resolve, Bucky couldn't shake the feeling of Klaus's dominance pressing down on him, leaving him trapped in a web of desire and despair.

"Look at me, Bucky," Klaus commanded his voice a low rumble that reverberated through the room. "I want you to see who's in control."

Bucky's breath caught in his throat as Klaus's gaze bore into him, piercing through the layers of resistance he had built up. There was a hunger in Klaus's eyes, a primal need that sent shivers down Bucky's spine even as he tried to push it away.

With each slow thrust, Klaus's hold on Bucky tightened, his fingers leaving imprints on Bucky's skin as if branding him as his own. Bucky's breath hitched with each movement, a mixture of pleasure and discomfort coursing through his veins.

He clenched his jaw, trying to suppress the moans that threatened to escape his lips, but Klaus's touch was relentless, pushing him further and further to the edge.

"Please," Bucky gasped, his voice strained with a combination of arousal and pain. "I can't... it's too much."

But Klaus remained unmoved, his grip firm as he continued his relentless pace. "Relax, my flower," he insisted, his voice carrying the weight of authority. "Take it."

Bucky's protests fell on deaf ears as Klaus drove him closer and closer to the brink of ecstasy. His mind reeled with conflicting emotions, pleasure warring with pain as Klaus claimed him as his own.

After reaching his climax, Klaus withdrew from Bucky, rising from the bed with purpose. "Get dressed," he ordered curtly, his voice laced with authority as he towered over Bucky, a stark reminder of his dominance.

Bucky winced as he moved, his body protesting every motion, a testament to the pain he endured under Klaus's rough touch. Ignoring Klaus's presence, he shuffled towards his discarded clothes, each step a painful reminder of the ordeal he had just endured.

The fabric felt abrasive against his skin as he hastily dressed, his fingers trembling as they fumbled with buttons and zippers. Klaus's impatient growl only added to the tension, his gaze bearing down on Bucky like a weight.

"I said, hurry up," Klaus snapped, his impatience evident as he watched Bucky's slow progress.

Bucky gritted his teeth, his frustration boiling over. "I'm going as fast as I can! It's not my fault," he retorted, his voice tinged with frustration.

Bucky's voice cracked with anger as he spoke, his frustration palpable in the air. "I'm covered in blood, can I at least wash my face?" he demanded, his hand gesturing towards his bruised and battered visage, small cuts still seeping blood.

Klaus regarded him with a cool indifference, his expression unreadable. "Fine," he relented, his tone begrudging as he gestured towards the bathroom. "But make it quick."

With a nod of acknowledgement, Bucky wasted no time, eager to rid himself of the physical reminders of Klaus. Silently, he made his way to the bathroom, his steps heavy with exhaustion and pain.

As Bucky scrubbed away the blood, each drop swirling down the drain, he couldn't help but feel a sense of detachment wash over him. His reflection stared back at him from the mirror, but it felt like a stranger gazing back, not the person he once knew.

The bruises marred his skin, the cuts etched their painful stories, and the haunted look in his eyes betrayed the turmoil within. He traced the lines of his face with trembling fingers, as if searching for some semblance of the man he used to be.

But all he found was a shell of his former self, a broken and battered soul trapped in a nightmare of Klaus's making. The reality of his situation crashed over him like a tidal wave, threatening to engulf him.

Staring into the abyss of his reflection, Bucky couldn't help but wonder if he would ever find his way back from the darkness Klaus had plunged him into.

As Bucky stepped out of the bathroom, his eyes fell upon Klaus standing near the doorway, an ominous presence in the dimly lit room. His heart quickened its pace as he noticed the blindfold and rope in Klaus's hands, a sinking feeling settling in the pit of his stomach.

A cold shiver ran down Bucky's spine as he realised the implications of Klaus's intentions. Fear clenched at his chest, but he forced himself to stand his ground, refusing to let Klaus see the extent of his terror.

"What's that for?" Bucky asked, his voice trembling slightly despite his efforts to sound composed.

Klaus's expression remained impassive as he held out the blindfold and rope. "It's time for you to learn what happens when you disobey like before," he stated, his voice low and menacing.

Bucky's pulse pounded in his ears as he weighed his options. He knew resisting Klaus would only invite more pain, but the thought of submitting to him filled him with a sickening sense of dread.

Bucky’s voice quivered with fear as he dared to speak up, his eyes darting nervously to Klaus, who stood with an air of ominous authority.

“What… what are you going to do to me?” Bucky’s voice was barely above a whisper, but the tremor in his tone betrayed the terror that churned within him.

Klaus’s gaze bore into him, cold and unyielding, as he considered Bucky’s question.

“You should know better than to ask,” Klaus replied sharply, his tone laced with a warning that sent a shiver down Bucky’s spine.

Bucky swallowed hard, the memory of the blood-soaked shirt from the previous night flashing before his eyes. He had seen firsthand the brutality that General Klaus was capable of when someone dared to disobey him, and the thought sent a wave of dread washing over him.

But despite his fear, Bucky knew he had to steel himself for whatever punishment Klaus had in store for him. He braced himself for the worst, his heart pounding in his chest as he awaited Klaus’s response.

With a silent command, Klaus extended his arm, a silent invitation for Bucky to step into his embrace. Trembling with trepidation, Bucky hesitated for a moment before tentatively moving forward, his steps faltering as he walked into Klaus’ waiting arms.

Klaus’s touch was both comforting and suffocating, his grip firm as he pulled Bucky close. At that moment, Bucky felt like a pawn in Klaus’s twisted game, powerless to resist the pull of the man who held him captive.

Klaus moved in front of Bucky’s trembling form, his movements deliberate and methodical. He started first with Bucky’s hands, tying the ropes firmly around his wrists, the rough texture biting into Bucky's skin. Then, with a firm yet gentle touch, he turned Bucky around to place the blindfold on, blocking out the world and plunging him into darkness.

The blindfold descended over his eyes, enveloping him in a cocoon of blackness. Bucky's heart hammered in his chest, a guttural fear coursing through his veins as he surrendered to Klaus's control.

“Good boy,” Klaus murmured, his voice a low rumble of approval as he held Bucky close. “You know better than to disobey me, Schatz.”

Bucky said nothing. His throat was constricted with fear as he resigned himself to Klaus’ will. He knew that resistance was futile and that Klaus held all the power in their twisted dynamic.

As Klaus' grip tightened around him, Bucky's mind raced with a thousand thoughts, each more terrifying than the last. But in that moment, all he could do was surrender to the darkness that enveloped him, praying for a sliver of hope amid this hell.

"But I'm afraid it's time to put an end to this little charade. Come with me."

With a heavy heart and trembling hands, Bucky complied with Klaus's orders. As they exited the room, Klaus guided him further down the halls. Every step felt like a descent into the unknown, with his heart pounding with fear and uncertainty.

As Klaus led him through the dimly lit corridors of the compound, Bucky's senses were heightened, and his every nerve was on edge as he tried to anticipate what lay ahead. The sound of their footsteps echoed off the cold stone walls, the only indication of their progress through the labyrinthine maze of hallways.

Finally, they reached the back of the compound, where a large truck awaited them in the darkness. Klaus opened the back door and motioned for Bucky to climb inside, his voice a low growl as he issued his orders.

"Get in, boy," Klaus commanded, his tone brooking no argument. "And remember any funny business, and you'll regret it."

With a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, Bucky nodded silently and climbed into the back of the truck, his hands still bound in front of him and the blindfold restricting his vision. He felt Klaus's presence behind him, his every movement was watched with hawk-like intensity.

As the truck rumbled to life and began to move, Bucky's heart raced with a mixture of fear and dread. He had no idea where Klaus was taking him or what fate awaited him at the end of their journey. All he knew was that he was completely at Klaus's mercy, and there was no telling what the General had in store for him.

To make matters worse, Klaus insisted that Bucky sit on his lap during the journey, the uncomfortable proximity only adding to Bucky's sense of unease. With every bump and turn of the road, Bucky's muscles tensed, his mind racing with a million questions and fears.

Feeling Klaus's arms wrap tightly around his waist, Bucky's heart skipped a beat, the gesture sending a shiver of revulsion down his

spine. His touch was like a vice grip that threatened to crush the last vestiges of Bucky's hope.

With every jolt and bump of the truck, Klaus's hold tightened possessively, his fingers digging into Bucky's flesh with a force that bordered on painful. Bucky's breath caught in his throat as he struggled to suppress the rising tide of panic that threatened to overwhelm him.

“You’re hurting my back,” Bucky bit, wiggling in pain to try and create space between Klaus and his lower back where Klaus had carved him up like a pumpkin.

“Deal with it,” Klaus growled, pulling Bucky impossibly closer to him.

Trapped in Klaus's suffocating embrace, Bucky felt as though he was going to implode, his every instinct screaming at him to break free. But he knew that any attempt to resist would only invite trouble, and so he forced himself to remain still, his muscles and back burning.

And so, with gritted teeth, Bucky braced himself against Klaus’ chest and closed his eyes behind the fabric.

He only knew the steady rumble of the truck's engine and the oppressive weight of Klaus's presence behind him.

Bucky's mind whirled with possibilities in the darkness behind the blindfold, each one worse than the last one he conjured up.

As the miles stretched on, Bucky could do nothing but hope that he would at least get a moment's peace before it all ended.

Chapter 12: The Price of Love

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Buck woke to the sound of heavy boots thudding against the wooden floorboards. His eyes snapped open, and his senses were instantly alert as he tried to make sense of what was happening.

With the help of the dim light filtering from a lantern, he saw the soldiers storming into the room, their faces shadowed as they marched over to his bunk.

"What's happening?" Buck demanded, his voice rough with sleep and alarm.

"Up, Major Cleven! Now!" One of the soldiers barked, grabbing him roughly by the arm and hauling him from Bucky's bunk.

From the loud ruckus, the men bunking with him started waking up and shouting, trying to defuse the situation but the soldiers weren't listening to them.

"What are you doing!?" Crank yelled!

"Hey, hey, stop! He hasn't done anything. Let go of him!" Brady yelled, panic lacing his voice as he watched wide-eyed as they pulled his friend from his bunk.

The Germans yelled at them and told them to stay down as they pointed their guns at the men, who were trying to get up and in between them.

Buck stumbled forward, his heart racing as adrenaline coursed through his veins. He tried to shake off their grip, but their grip was too tight.

"Let me go!" Buck protested, his voice rising in anger at the rough man-handling with no explanation.

His words fell on deaf ears as they dragged him from the barracks and into the biting cold. The snow crunched beneath his boots as they marched him towards the front gate of the camp, the icy wind sinking into his bones.

"What's going on?" Buck demanded again, his voice tinged with a little bit of fear and confusion.

The Germans remained silent, their faces blank, as they shoved him roughly forward. Buck's heart hammered in his chest as a sense of dread settled over him when no one would answer him.

This wasn't normal. Men weren't just dragged from their barracks for no reason.

"Let go!" Buck snapped, his voice rising. "What's going on? I haven't done anything!"

But his words went unanswered as they threw him to the ground with a brutal force that knocked the wind from his lungs. Buck gasped for air, the icy mud seeping into his clothes as he struggled to push himself upright.

"Stay down!" a guard growled, levelling his rifle at Buck's face.

Buck's breath caught in his throat as he looked up into the cold, disgusted faces of the soldiers.

Fear clawed at his chest, threatening to overwhelm him, but he refused to let it show. He wasn't going to show weakness in front of the bastards. It wasn't in his nature.

"No," Buck said, his voice steady despite the fear that threatened to consume him.

The harsh sound of an armoured truck grinding to a halt outside the camp's gates shattered his stare off against the German soldier pointing the rifle at his head.

His breath caught in his throat as he watched the towering figure of the General step out of the truck, his presence causing the soldiers to fidget uncomfortably.

But it was the sight that accompanied him that stole the air from Buck's lungs and almost set him into a downward spiral, chills racing down his spine.

There, bound and blindfolded, was the easily recognisable form of his boyfriend, bruised and beaten to high hell, but still his beautiful Bucky. Bucky's body slumped forward as the General dragged him from the truck, a stark contrast to the vibrant wildfire spirit Buck

knew so well.

"No," Buck whispered, his voice barely more than a hoarse murmur.

He felt as if the ground had fallen away beneath him, leaving him adrift. His beautiful Bucky, the man he adored and loved more than anything in this world was only metres away, and he desperately wanted to run to him, hold him, and tell him he's safe, how much he loved him and that it's going to be okay.

Helplessness clawed at his insides as he watched the General's cruel, possessive way in which he manhandled Bucky, his heart breaking with each agonising step his other half was forced to take.

"What has he done to you?" Buck whispered, his voice barely audible over the pounding of his own heart.

Buck's heart twisted as he longed to reach out to Bucky, to offer him comfort and reassurance, to let him know that his Buck was here. But before he could utter a word, the General's chilling laughter filled the air, drowning out Buck's choked gasp.

"Ah, there you are," the General sneered, his voice dripping with disgust as he pulled Bucky tighter against his chest. "I've heard a lot about you, more than I want really. I must say, though, this was a long time coming."

Buck's jaw tightened, and his gaze locked with the General's bloodthirsty eyes as he struggled to contain the rising tide of anger within him. He knew that the General's words were meant to provoke him, to eat at him in a power play.

“Fuck you” Buck snarled.

Before he could respond further, however, a cry pierced the air, cutting through the tension between the two men like a knife.

Buck's heart skipped a beat as he watched Bucky fight against the General's hold now, his raspy voice filled with desperation and disbelief.

"Buck!? Buck, is that you?" Bucky's voice rang out, raw with emotion, his blindfold failing to stop the recognition that flooded through him at Buck's voice.

Tears welled in Buck's eyes as he took in Bucky, his heart constricting at the sight of his love after agonising weeks of absence.

Every fibre of his being ached to hold Bucky close, to shelter him from everything he had endured. But in the cruel reality of their circumstances, such comfort remained out of reach.

"Yes, Bucky, it's me." Buck's voice quivered with emotion, his words a lifeline in the face of evil that threatened to consume them both. "I'm here, Bucky! I'm right here!"

A sob escaped Bucky's lips, his knees threatening to buckle beneath him as the weight of his suffering collided with the relief of hearing Buck's voice after being torn apart.

The blindfold shrouding his sight served only to heighten the intensity of his emotions, leaving him reeling in a whirlwind of emotion and aching to see his boyfriend.

The General moved with deliberate cruelty and chuckled, tearing off Bucky's blindfold.

Bucky's gaze locked onto Buck as soon as his eyes adjusted to the change, his heart constricting at the sight of his Buck kneeling in the snow, worn and pale but only metres away.

But the warmth was short-lived as Bucky's eyes widened in horror at the sight of the guns levelled at Buck, the threat of violence in the air.

Panic seized him, his mind racing with urgency as he turned to Klaus, his voice laced with anger and fear.

"What's going on? Tell them to put their guns down!" Bucky's voice cracked as he shoved against the General's chest with his bound wrists, his instincts driving him to protect Buck at any cost.

But before he could make another move, Klaus's grip tightened, wrenching Bucky back with a cruel strength that left him gasping for air.

The world spun around him as he stumbled, his back colliding with Klaus's hip, a shout of pain escaping his mouth.

"Gah, fuck!" Bucky whimpered between clenched teeth, his neck straining at the hot pain licking up his back.

Bucky's breath caught in his throat as Klaus' cruel grip cupped his jaw, forcing him to meet Buck's gaze, the other arm wrapping firmly around his waist.

The intensity of the moment hung heavy in the air, the weight of the General's threat and obsession bearing down on him now more than ever with Buck so close. Klaus was doing the one thing he knew would hurt him the most.

"This is a warning, my boy." Klaus' words were a hiss against Bucky's ear, his hot breath sending shivers down Bucky's spine. "This is nothing compared to what I'll do to him if you keep disobeying me."

Fear coursed through Bucky's veins like ice water, his heart pounding in his chest as he struggled to maintain his composure.

“Wait, just wait. Please! I-I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it. Just stop” He clenched his fists, his knuckles white with tension, as he fought against the hold.

But before he could utter a word, the General nodded to the soldiers, a silent command that sent his blood cold.

A sickening sense of powerless dread set in, and Bucky watched with tears as they began to strike Buck, their blows raining down upon him with merciless ferocity, sickening glee marring their faces.

Buck's cries of pain and the thuds echoed in the stillness of the camp, each blow driving him further into the unforgiving ground.

Bucky's heart shattered at the sight, his breath catching in his throat as he struggled against Klaus’s hold.

"No! Stop!" Bucky screamed, his voice raw. But his pleas fell on deaf ears as the soldiers continued their relentless assault, their brutality a reminder of why they were even here.

Bucky's vision blurred with tears as he watched Buck's blood spill onto the pristine snow, staining it red.

Heart pounding in his chest as he watched in horror, his voice choked with desperation as he pleaded with Klaus. "Please, Klaus, make them stop! I'll do anything you ask. Just please, don't hurt him anymore. I’m sorry, I’m so fucking sorry!"

But Klaus’s cold gaze remained fixed on Buck, his expression unmoved

by Bucky's pleas. "You brought this upon him, my boy," he sneered, his words dripping with barely bottled rage. "You alone have the power to end his suffering."

Bucky's heart sank as the weight of the General's words settled over him, guilt rushing through his veins.

“Buck, god damn it, Buck! I’m sorry” Bucky screamed at Buck, tears rolling down his cheeks as he started to hyperventilate.

He knew that he was powerless to stop the brutality unfolding before him and that his every attempt to protect Buck only served to further endanger his boyfriend.

He couldn't stand idly by while Buck suffered because of him.

“Bucky…I-it’s O-okay. It’s…you and…I al-ways” Buck grunted out through the pain, his body feeling like it was crumbling under the relentless blows, but hearing Bucky scream hurt worse than anything they could do to him.

With a surge of desperation, Bucky fought against the General's grip with the last of his strength, his voice hoarse with emotion as he continued to plead for mercy. "Please, Klaus. Please, I swear to you! I’m done fighting. Just don't hurt him anymore! He doesn't deserve this!"

But his words were ignored. Klaus merely chuckled, his grip tightening around Bucky's jaw with a cruel strength that left him gasping for air. Forcing him to watch his lover bleed on the snow and hear his grunts of pain stab into his soul.

"Your words mean nothing, my beautiful boy," the General tsked, his eyes alight with a twisted sense of satisfaction. "Actions speak louder than words, and yours have spoken volumes, my flower."

Bucky's heart hammered in his chest as he watched Buck's battered form crumple to the ground again, his breath coming in ragged gasps as he struggled now to rise against the onslaught.

Desperation clawed at Bucky's insides as he fought against Klaus's grip, his mind racing with a frantic urgency as he searched for a way to end the nightmare unfolding before them. Buck couldn’t take much more of this. No man could.

But as the soldiers closed in around Buck, their guns now trained on his trembling form, Bucky knew that time was running out.

With a heavy heart, he made a decision that tore at his very soul.

Turning his back to Buck, he slowly dropped to his knees in the snow and mud, his hands trembling as he reached out to grasp Klaus' hand. He forced himself to look up into the General's cold, calculating eyes, his voice barely more than a whisper as he spoke.

"Make them stop, and I'll be yours," Bucky pleaded, his words laced with defeat. "I'll be only yours. Mind, body, and soul. Anything you want to do, I'll let you do it. Even if you wanted to cut my throat here and now, I'd help you do it. Just... please, for the love of God, stop them!"

Tears pricked at the corners of Bucky's eyes as he gripped the General's balled fist, his entire being trembling with desperation.

He knew what he was offering was a betrayal of everything he had promised himself—a sacrifice made in the name of love. But in that moment, with Buck's life hanging in the balance, he would do whatever it took to keep him safe. Including sacrificing himself.

The General's gaze bore into him, his expression unreadable as he considered Bucky's offer. For a heartbeat, the world seemed to hold its breath, the silence echoing in the stillness of the snowy wasteland.

And then, with a slow, deliberate nod, the General signalled to the soldiers, his voice so cold that it cut through the icy air like a knife.

"Stand down," he commanded, his words carrying across the yard. "Let him go."

Relief flooded through Bucky like a tidal wave, making him collapse at Klaus' feet as the soldiers hesitated, their guns lowering slightly in disappointment.

Buck's heart clenched with agony as he watched Bucky's desperate plea, the sight searing into his brain like a haunting melody that he'd never be able to erase.

With each second, the weight of their predicament bore down on him, threatening to crush him.

"No, Bucky, don't," Buck choked out through the blood.

Spitting the blood pooling in his mouth out, he struggled to pull himself closer to the gate, his hand outstretched in a desperate attempt to reach Bucky.

Blood staining the snow beneath him as he reached the gate.

Bucky turned at the sound of Buck's voice, his eyes brimming with spilt tears as he saw Buck, beaten to an inch of his life yet still filled with the desperate need to reach him. God he loved him with every fibre of his being and he would miss him so much.

A gut-wrenching sob escaped his lips as he met Buck's gaze, his heart breaking at the thought of leaving him behind and never seeing him again.

"Let me say goodbye, please." Bucky's voice trembled with emotion. "Give me this one last thing, and I'll come back to you willingly."

Klaus regarded Bucky with a cold, calculating gaze, his expression unreadable as he weighed Bucky's request.

For a moment, the air hung heavy with tension, and the silence was broken only by the sound of his ragged breaths and sobs.

Finally, with a slow nod of his head, Klaus relented. "Very well," he said, untying Bucky’s wrists, his voice a low rumble. "But make it quick. Time is of the essence, and if you try anything, I’ll make you put a bullet in him myself."

The bitter cold of the winter morning seemed to seep into Buck's bones as he kneeled in the blood-stained snow, his trembling hand reaching out through the bars of the gate towards Bucky.

Every part of him ached to feel Bucky, to smell him, to taste him. To feel his lover's skin against his own.

With Klaus’ consent, Bucky hurried to the gate where Buck was reaching for him. Their hands found each other through the gate, fingers intertwining in a desperate embrace as Bucky crashed to his knees, ignoring the pain that shot up his back.

Buck's heart threatened to shatter as he brought his hands to Bucky's face, his fingers tracing the lines of his beloved's battered features, landing gently on his split lip.

"Bucky" Buck's voice was barely a whisper, choked with emotion as

tears welled in his eyes. "Oh, Bucky..."

Bucky's eyes, once vibrant with the love for life life, now seemed dulled by the weight of their circumstances. But even in their dimmed state, they held that ever-burning fire and one final message to the man he loved more than life itself.

"I love you, Buck. God, I love you so fucking much." Bucky's voice trembled with raw emotion, each word laced with the pain of their impending separation. "I'm so sorry, sorry for everything." He cried, wiping the blood from Buck's face with ever-gentle hands, trembling at what he'd caused.

Buck's heart clenched at the torture in Bucky's voice, the weight of his pain bearing down on him like a leaden weight. This beautiful, beautiful man had nothing to be sorry about.

Tears streamed down his cheeks as he listened to the man he adored pour out his heart.

Buck could hardly breathe as he looked into Bucky's eyes, his own heart breaking with the realisation that their time together was slipping away each second.

"God, I love you too, Bucky. More than anything. This isn't your fault, baby. Don't take this guilt on," Buck cried, resting his forehead against Bucky's.

Hands trembling, Bucky reached into the folds of his pants, retrieving a small folded-up piece of paper from within, hiding it from Klaus' watchful eyes.

He pressed it into Buck's hand, their fingers brushing against each other for one final, fleeting moment.

"I wrote this for you," Bucky whispered, his voice barely audible enough, in an attempt to not alert Klaus. "Keep it close to your heart, and know that wherever you go, whatever happens, my love will always be with you."

Buck clutched the letter tightly to his chest, his heart overflowing with grief, before quickly hiding it in his pants.

Bucky's words echoed in his mind, each one a painful reminder of the love they shared and the sacrifice they were now forced to make.

"I'll stop at nothing to find you, Bucky." Buck's voice trembled with raw emotion as he spoke, his gaze locked with Bucky's. "I'll search every corner of this world until I have you back in my arms like it should be. It'll be just us again, always."

But Bucky's smile was tinged with sadness and resignation. His hand reached out, gently wiping the blood and tears from Buck's cheeks and lip.

"Oh, my sweet Buck." His voice was barely a whisper, filled with an emotion that threatened to consume them both. "I'm already gone. I'll never be that man that you loved. I'll never be the same."

Buck's heart clenched at Bucky's words, the weight of their finality pressing down on him. Tears welled in his eyes as he reached out to grasp Bucky's hand, their fingers intertwining in a silent vow.

"I'll love you until the day I die, and then in every life after that. I'll take every part of you and love it with my whole heart. Nothing could stop me from loving you, baby. You have to believe that," Buck whispered, putting a hand on Bucky's heart.

"Promise me, Buck." Bucky's voice cracked with desperation, his heart breaking with each word. "Promise me you'll find a way to go on, even when I'm no longer by your side. Promise me you'll survive this godforsaken war and that you'll live a long and fulfilling life. Don't let me hold you back." His voice trembled, the weight of his plea crushing him under its unbearable gravity.

"Promise me," he pleaded, his voice breaking as he fought to keep his composure. "Promise me that you'll find the strength to move on, let me fade slowly from your memory, baby. You have too. Promise me you'll find happiness again, even if it's without me. Even if it's with Marge." Tears streaked down his face.

Bucky's heart felt like it was being torn apart with each word, but he knew this was the only way.

He couldn't bear the thought of dragging Buck down with him into the pits of hell, and he couldn't bear the idea of his love suffering because of him.

And so, with every last fibre of his being, he begged, "Promise me this, Buck. Please, promise me."

Buck's breath caught in his throat as he looked into Bucky's eyes, his

heart breaking at the thought of a life without him.

But even as this felt like the end that threatened to consume them, he knew that he could never forget the man he loved more than life itself.

"I can't promise that, Bucky." Buck's voice was barely a whisper, filled with a determination that burned bright despite the internal war that threatened to overwhelm him. "I won't forget you. I don’t ever want to forget you and I never could forget you." His hands reached out, grasping desperately at Bucky's as if trying to hold onto him forever. "I'll stop at nothing until you're safe again. I swear it."

His words hung heavy in the air, a solemn vow born from the depths of his heart. Buck's resolve was unwavering, fueled by his fierce determination, love and loyalty to see Bucky again, to hold him in his arms, and to never let go.

Bucky's breath hitched as he stared into Buck's eyes, seeing the hurt mirrored in their depths. Despite this, he couldn't help but feel a glimmer of hope blooming within him, ignited by the sheer force of Buck's love.

With a silent nod, Bucky accepted Buck's promise, his gaze filled with bittersweet gratitude that pierced Buck's soul.

As the seconds dwindled, Klaus’ impatience reached a boiling point, his jealousy igniting into a fiery rage that he could no longer contain. With a bark that echoed through the air like thunder, he stormed forward, his figure imposing against the backdrop of the trees.

"Time's up!" His voice roared, authority and jealousy bleeding into his words that brooked no argument.

Bucky's heart clenched at the sound, the weight of impending separation bearing down on him with a force that threatened to crush him.

With a surge of determination, he leant forward, his gaze locked with Buck's in a silent plea for understanding.

In that charged moment, with Klaus’ presence looming behind him, Bucky knew that he had to act.

He leant forward between the gate, capturing Buck's lips in one last desperate kiss, pouring every ounce of love and longing into the

fleeting touch.

"Don't count on it," he whispered against Buck's lips, his voice trembling with the weight of their farewell.

Reluctantly, he looked away from Buck to glance at the waiting figure of Klaus.

Anger radiated off the man in palpable waves, his impatience a stark reminder of the consequences of defiance.

His chest constricted as he pulled away from Buck’s embrace, his heart heavy with the weight of their separation. Each step he took away felt like a dagger to his soul, the echoes of Buck’s cries for him ringing in his ears.

Buck’s screams tore at Bucky’s resolve, threatening to unravel the carefully constructed walls around his heart. But he knew he couldn’t look back. He couldn’t let himself be swayed by the agony in Buck’s voice. To do so would be to condemn his love to death.

Bucky's thoughts ground to a halt at the sight and smell that greeted him when he glanced to the left of the gates. There, displayed for all to see, was the mutilated body of a German soldier.

Bucky recoiled at the sight, bile rising in his throat at the sheer brutality of what he beheld. The soldier's lips, tongue, and half of his face had been savagely cut off, leaving behind a grotesque visage that spoke volumes of the horrors he had endured. The blood Klaus had come back covered in belonged to this man. He recalls Klaus bragging about how he'd killed the man.

His mutilated remains were hung up on a pole, a grim warning to all who dared to cross Klaus. The stench of blood and decay filled the air, mingling with the sickly-sweet scent of death that clung to the camp.

Klaus paused next to his boy, placing his hand on the small of his back. His gaze was cold and indifferent, as he regarded it with a casual detachment. "A traitor," he remarked, his voice devoid of

emotion. "He dared to betray me, to feed information to your precious Buck and endangering you."

Bucky's blood ran cold at Klaus's words, his mind reeling with the implications of what he had just witnessed. This was the price of defiance—the fate that awaited those who dared to stand in Klaus's way.

With that, Klaus walked ahead to the truck, leaving Bucky to stare at the corpse swaying in the wind. What if that had been Buck because of the way he'd acted this morning? Everything he did from here on out would only put Buck in danger. He glanced at his shaking hands and willed them to stop. He couldn't afford to be weak. Bucky stole one last glance back at the mutilated corpse. He would do whatever it took to protect Buck from suffering from the same fate.

With a steely resolve, Bucky focused on Klaus, the man who held Buck’s life in his hands. He ignored the pleading in Buck’s screams and the desperate cries that tore at his heart. He had to be strong. He had to protect Buck at all costs, even if it meant sacrificing his own happiness.

As he reached Klaus, his arm outstretched in a silent demand, Bucky knew what he had to do. He couldn’t risk Buck’s safety by looking back. He couldn’t let himself be consumed by the love he felt for him.

In that moment, he made a silent vow to protect Buck, even if it meant sacrificing his own happiness in the process. Without looking back, Bucky walked into Klaus’ embrace, steeling himself for the challenges that lay ahead.

Chapter End Notes

> So our boys are finally reunited, just not in the way we had all hoped! How many of you guys saw this happening? Or did it catch you by surprise as much as it did our boys.
>
> I hope you all enjoyed the newest chapter in the story and I can’t wait to hear what you guys thought. Much love! x

Chapter 13: Embers Of The Heart

Tears streamed down Buck's cheeks as he watched Bucky walk into the waiting arms of Klaus.

His heart pounded in his chest, and the sight of Bucky leaving this time hit him harder than ever before.

Seeing the state Bucky was in—the bruises, so many damn bruises, and cuts marring his once vibrant spirit—only amplified the fear gnawing at Buck's insides—the fear that he might never see his other half again.

The weight of it all crashed down on him at once—a tidal wave of grief and soul-shattering agony. Buck's breath came in ragged gasps as he struggled to hold himself together. But watching Bucky walk back into that monster's arms to save him was too much to bear.

Bucky has always been too damn self-sacrificing for his own good, never one to put himself first. God, how he wished that wasn't the case this time. For once, he wished that Bucky had been selfish.

As Bucky climbed into the truck without looking back, Buck's anguish reached a fever pitch. He couldn't contain it any longer—the pain, the fear, and the sheer injustice of it all boiled over, erupting from him in a scream of rage and grief.

"Bucky! Don't do this! Please! God dam it, John!" Buck screamed at the truck, his voice shattering the stillness of the camp—a raw, guttural cry that echoed through the empty yard.

He threw his head back and yelled his frustration, his entire being consumed by the overwhelming agony of losing Bucky once again.

Buck watched as the General said something in the truck before shutting the door and stalking towards him.

After ensuring Bucky was safe and securely settled in the truck, Klaus turned on his heels and strode back towards Buck, his expression dark and livid. He approached with purpose, his steps deliberate and calculated.

As he reached Buck, Klaus stood over him, his presence casting a shadow over the bloodied body before him. He studied Major Cleven

with a cold, calculating gaze, his eyes narrowing with disdain as he took in the sight of the broken man before him.

“You’re a pathetic excuse for a soldier and man, Major Cleven,” Klaus sneered, his voice dripping with contempt. “John deserves better than you.”

Buck’s jaw tightened at the insult and the mention of Bucky, but he refused to cower in the face of the General. He met Klaus’ gaze head-on, his eyes blazing and his jaw clenched as he braced himself for whatever verbal assault was to come.

Klaus leant down towards Buck, a cruel smirk playing at the corners of his lips as he met Buck’s defiant gaze. “You’re lucky to be alive, American,” he spat, his voice laced with venom. “The only reason you’re still breathing is because that’s what my boy wants.”

Buck’s heart sank at Klaus’s words, a cold dread settling in the pit of his stomach. He knew all too well the power Klaus held over Bucky and the twisted bond that bound them together in a web of fear and manipulation.

But despite the fear for Bucky gnawing at him, Buck refused to let Klaus see him falter. He squared his shoulders, his jaw clenched in defiance, as he met Klaus’s gaze head-on.

“I’ll never stop coming for him,” Buck declared, his voice steady despite the tremble in his hands. “No matter what you do to me, I’ll find a way to save him from you.”

Klaus’s laughter echoed through the yard, a chilling sound that sent shivers down Buck’s spine. “You think you can save him?” Klaus taunted, his voice dripping with malice. “You’re a fool, American. You’re going to die in this camp, just like all the other rotting rats in here.”

Buck’s fists clenched at his sides, his anger simmering beneath the surface as Klaus continued his taunts. “And even if you somehow manage to survive,” Klaus sneered, his tone mocking, “you’ll have to find us first. And trust me, that won’t be easy, and that’s not something I’ll let happen. Every inch of that boy belongs to me.”

A surge of confidence welled up within Buck, fueling his determination to save Bucky from Klaus. “I’ll find you,” he growled, his voice laced with a steely resolve. “No matter where you go, I’ll track you down, and I’ll save him and kill you. You can count on

that."

Klaus's laughter echoed through the air, a chilling sound that washed over Buck as the General squatted down to meet him eye-to-eye. His smirk oozed with malicious satisfaction as he taunted Buck with cruel words.

"Have fun in here, if you make it through the night," Klaus sneered, his voice dripping with contempt. "Just remember, it'll be my cock that he's choking on tonight and begging for. My mark is forever on his back. Mine"

Buck's fists clenched at his sides, his knuckles white with rage as he lunged forward against the gate, but Klaus deftly dodged out of reach, laughing cruelly at Buck's futile attempt to strike him.

"Stay back, Cleven," Klaus warned, his tone laced with amusement as he evaded Buck's grasp. "You're in no position to challenge me. Don't forget your place."

With a mocking grin, Klaus turned on his heels and strode back towards the waiting truck, his laughter ringing in Buck's ears.

Ignoring Buck's shouts of anger, Klaus disappeared into the darkness of the truck. He watched it rumble to life and take his heart away from him once again, leaving Buck alone with his thoughts and the crushing weight of it all.

The realisation of what Klaus had planned for Bucky gnawed at Buck's insides. He was going to rip the man apart as soon as he had the chance.

There was nothing in this world that would ever stop Buck from chasing Bucky. Wherever he went, Buck would follow.

Buck was pulled from his thoughts by rough hands and the belittling of insults from the German soldiers, but he paid them no heed and kept his eyes on where the truck had left.

As the guards dragged Buck back to his barracks, his body felt like dead weight, with every movement sending jolts of pain radiating through his battered frame.

With a grunt, they threw him onto the floor inside, the impact jarring his already bruised and aching body, before storming out to release the other prisoners.

“Damn it,” Buck hissed through clenched teeth, struggling to push himself upright despite the throbbing agony coursing through him.

Demarco, Crank, and Brady rushed to his side, their faces etched with concern and confusion as they kneeled beside him.

“What the hell happened, Buck?” Demarco demanded, his voice tight with worry as he reached out to steady Buck.

Crank and Brady exchanged a glance, their expressions mirroring Demarco’s concern as they awaited Buck’s response.

Buck winced as he tried to sit up, his muscles protesting with every movement. “Klaus… he… he came with Bucky,” he managed to choke out, his voice strained with pain and the tightness from trying to hold back his sobs. “God, you should’ve seen him. I’m scared. I’m so damn scared that I’m gonna lose him forever. He made a show of having me beaten in front of him and then took Bucky again.”

The colour drained from Demarco’s face, his eyes widening in shock and disbelief. “Took him where?” he demanded, his voice rising with panic.

Buck gritted his teeth against the pain, his fists clenching at his sides as he fought to remain coherent. “I don’t know,” he admitted his voice barely above a whisper, the beating starting to take its toll. “But we have to do something. We have to find him before it’s too late.”

Crank and Brady exchanged a worried glance, the gravity of the situation sinking in as they realised the danger Bucky was in, and now Buck himself needed medical attention.

“We’ll help you, Buck,” Crank declared, determination shining in his eyes as he met Buck’s gaze. “Whatever it takes, we’ll get him back.”

Brady nodded in agreement, his jaw set with resolve as he reached out to offer Buck a hand. “You can count on us, no matter what,” he said firmly.

With a nod of gratitude, Buck accepted their support, his heart heavy with the weight of the task ahead, and with that, he promptly passed out.

As Buck’s body slumped against the floor, unconsciousness washing over him, Demarco, Crank, and Brady exchanged worried glances, their concern deepening at the sight of their friend’s limp form.

With careful precision, Crank and Brady lifted Buck's unconscious form off the floor, their muscles straining with the effort as they carried him towards Bucky's bunk.

Demarco followed closely behind, his eyes scanning their surroundings for anything they could use to help treat Buck.

Gently, they laid Buck down on Bucky's bunk, the familiar mattress providing a welcome respite for his battered body.

Brady quickly grabbed a spare blanket and draped it over Buck, tucking it around him to keep him warm in the chilly air.

"We need to get him some help," Crank said urgently, his voice filled with concern as he glanced down at Buck's pale face. "He's in bad shape. Bastards damn near killed him."

Demarco nodded in agreement, his mind racing with worry as he considered their options. "I'll go find a medic," he said, fear shining in his eyes as he turned to leave the barracks.

Crank nodded in thanks, his focus solely on Buck as he brushed a strand of hair away from his friend's forehead. "Hang in there, Buck," he murmured, his voice thick with emotion. "We'll get you patched up in no time."

With that, Demarco dashed out of the barracks, his footsteps echoing through the night as he raced towards the Docs barracks.

Meanwhile, Crank and Brady remained by Buck's side, their hearts heavy with worry as they waited for help to arrive.

All they could do now was pray that Buck would make it through the night and that they would find a way to bring Bucky back home, where he belonged.

Suddenly, the sound of approaching footsteps drew their attention, and Demarco reappeared with a medic in tow.

Relief flooded through Crank and Brady as Demarco returned with the medic, their hearts lifting at the sight of help finally arriving. The medic wasted no time in rushing to Buck's side, his experienced hands quickly assessing the extent of Buck's injuries with practised efficiency.

"What happened to him?" the medic asked, his voice calm and

authoritative as he began to examine Buck's bruises and cuts.

"We don't know," Crank replied, his voice filled with worry as he watched the medic work. "The General paid our boy a visit."

The medic's brow furrowed in concern as he continued his examination, his fingers gentle as he probed Buck's injuries. "This isn't great guy's. He could have internal injuries for all we know," he declared, his tone urgent as he turned to Crank and Brady. "Help me check his back and stomach."

Crank and Brady nodded in agreement, their eyes scanning Buck's pale face, before carefully pushing up his sweater.

All three of them sucked in a breath at the darkening bruises littering his body.

"Jesus," Crank breathed, squeezing Buck's hand.

The medic's expression hardened as he took in the extent of Buck's injuries, his professional demeanour momentarily slipping as he assessed the severity of the situation. "We need to get him to the infirmary immediately," he urged, his voice tense with urgency. "Every second counts."

Crank and Brady exchanged worried glances, their hearts heavy with concern for their friend. With a shared nod, they carefully lifted Buck's sweater, revealing the deep, mottled bruises that marred his skin. The sight was enough to make their blood run cold, and they couldn't help but feel a surge of anger towards whoever had inflicted such harm upon their friend.

"This is brutal," Brady muttered, his voice barely above a whisper as he reached out to gently touch one of the bruises.

Crank nodded in agreement, his jaw set with determination as he squeezed Buck's hand in a silent gesture of support.

The medic sighed heavily, knowing the limitations of their situation. "There's no infirmary here," he explained, his voice tinged with frustration. "We'll have to work with what we have."

He continued his examination, checking for any signs of internal damage. After a thorough assessment, he finally spoke up, relief evident in his tone. "Fortunately, there are no internal injuries. But we need to keep a close watch on him overnight. Make sure he stays

hydrated and monitor his condition closely."

Crank and Brady nodded, understanding the gravity of the situation. They exchanged a determined glance, silently vowing to do whatever it took to help their friend pull through, and bunkered down on either side of Buck, wiping away the blood and taking turns to watch over him.

Hours passed in tense silence, the barracks shrouded in darkness, save for the dim glow of a single lantern. Crank and Brady remained vigilant, their senses on high alert for any change in Buck's condition. The flickering lantern cast long shadows across the barrack walls, the only illumination source in the otherwise darkened room. Its feeble light danced across Buck's pale face, highlighting the bruises and cuts that marred his skin.

Crank clenched his fists at his sides, his jaw set with worry as he fought back the overwhelming tide of fear. He couldn't lose both of his best friends one after the other, and having seen Buck be dragged away and then brought back looking like he'd been run over had spooked him. He couldn't afford to give in to his worries, though, not when Buck needed him the most.

Brady paced back and forth, his footsteps echoing softly against the wooden floorboards. With each hour, his anxiety grew, a gnawing sense of helplessness gnawing at his insides. He wished there was more he could do to ease Buck's suffering, to chase away the shadows that lingered in his friend's eyes, and to bring back Bucky, but everything seemed to feel impossible when the General kept proving just how much power he held over all of them.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, Buck stirred, his eyelids fluttering open to reveal tired but clear eyes. Crank and Brady rushed to his side, their relief palpable as they watched Buck struggle to sit up.

"Buck, how are you feeling?" Crank asked, his voice laced with concern.

Buck managed a weak smile, though it was evident that every movement caused him pain. "Like I've been run over by a damn truck," he replied hoarsely, his voice barely above a whisper. "But I'm still kicking."

Crank and Brady exchanged a glance, their hearts swelling with admiration and respect for their Major's resilience. Despite the odds

stacked against him, Buck never stayed down. Especially when one of his men were in danger. He was an unstoppable force to be reckoned with.

Chapter 14: Sacrifice in Silence

Chapter Notes

> Thank you for being a part of this adventure thus far. You're support and encouragement mean the world to me, and I am endlessly grateful for the opportunity to share this story with you.
>
> We'll explore the complex dynamics of their relationship and uncover the secrets that await along the turbulent journey of Bucky and Buck. - Much love!

As the truck rolled along the winding road away from Buck, a knot of panic tightened in Bucky's chest, constricting his breath and fogging his thoughts. The realisation hit him like a tonne of bricks—he had surrendered himself completely to Klaus. Every decision and every action were now dictated by the man next to him.

Bucky's hands trembled violently as he gripped the seat, his knuckles whitening. A terrifying thought crossed his mind. Had he become a puppet, strings pulled by Klaus' unfeeling hands? This question haunted him, with each thump of his racing heart echoing the alarming possibility that he might lose himself completely to Klaus's manipulations. His knee started to bounce, and nervous energy was radiating from him.

Bucky stole a glance at Klaus, who sat next to him with an air of casual confidence, seemingly oblivious to the panic building within Bucky. The man's features were impassive and unreadable, but Bucky couldn't shake the feeling that Klaus could see right through him.

Klaus, perceiving the shift in Bucky's demeanour, placed a firm hand on his thigh, rubbing circles. A gesture that should have been comforting but instead felt like a shackle as he conversed with one of his men in their mother tongue. His voice was a calm contrast to the storm of fear raging inside Bucky.

The walls seemed to close in around him, and the confines of the truck suddenly felt suffocatingly small. He needed air, space, anything to escape the suffocating grip of Klaus.

"Stop the truck," Bucky blurted out, his voice raw with panic. Klaus's immediate response was a flicker of annoyance and a cold question. "What's wrong, Flower?" His tone, once possibly endearing, now

seemed patronising and filled with hidden threats.

"I need... I need to get out," Bucky stammered, his heart racing in his chest. "I can't... I can't do this."

Klaus's expression hardened—a mask of icy control replacing the brief sign of annoyance. His hand tightened painfully on Bucky's thigh. "We're almost there, Flower," he said, his voice firm. "You'll be safe with me."

Klaus watched Bucky's struggle with a mixture of interest and disdain. To him, his boy was like a beautiful but wild animal that needed taming. Klaus believed in the power of broken spirits. In his view, loyalty was strongest when it was carved out of total surrender. As he observed Bucky's panic, a part of him relished the control he wielded over the boy. It was not just about physical dominance—it was about reshaping a soul.

But Bucky's panic only intensified, his chest constricting with every laboured breath as the fingers dug into the sensitive part of his thigh. "Please, Klaus," he pleaded, desperation lacing his voice. "I can't—"

Before he could finish his sentence, Klaus reached out with lightning speed, pinning Bucky against the back of the truck with a forceful hand. Bucky's breath caught in his throat as Klaus leant over him, his gaze cold.

"You will stay right here, by my side, until your last breath, my boy," Klaus growled, his voice low and menacing. "You belong to me now, Flower. There's no escape. There's nothing unless I allow it for you."

Bucky's heart hammered in his chest, his vision swimming with tears as he fought against Klaus's iron grip. "Let me go," he choked out, a plea made all the more pathetic by Klaus's smirk.

But Klaus refused to relent, his fingers digging into Bucky's shoulders with bruising force. Bucky's breath came in short, ragged gasps as he struggled to break free, his mind a whirlwind of panic.

"You're mine," Klaus hissed, his breath hot against Bucky's ear. "And you will obey me."

With each word, Bucky's panic intensified, his chest heaving as he hyperventilated. The world spun around him in a dizzying blur, his thoughts fragmented and disjointed.

As the truck continued down the streets, Bucky felt like he was breaking apart under Klaus' gaze. He couldn't escape. He couldn't break free from the chains that bound him to this man.

Klaus leant in close, his voice a menacing whisper in Bucky's ear. "You made a deal, Flower," he said, his tone unforgiving. "You gave yourself to me, mind, body, and soul. And if you try to go back on that deal, well, I'll turn this truck around and force you to participate in what happens to your buddy."

Klaus's words were calculated, chosen to instill maximum fear and submission. As Bucky's vision blurred with tears, his resistance began to crumble. He realised with gut-wrenching certainty that Klaus's psychological cage was as potent as physical chains.

He couldn't risk it. He couldn't risk Buck's life for his own selfish needs.

With trembling hands, Bucky reached out and grasped Klaus's hands tightly, his voice shaky but resolute. "I'm yours. I'm sorry. Please forgive me," he whispered, the words tasting bitter on his tongue. "I'll do whatever you ask, Klaus."

Klaus's lips curled into a sinister smile, satisfaction gleaming in his eyes. "That's better," he said, his grip on Bucky's shoulders relenting slightly, one hand cupping Bucky's chin and thumbing the tears. "Remember, Schatz, you made this choice. And now, you'll have to live with it."

As the truck rumbled to a stop outside, Bucky's heart sank. The familiar sight of the compound sent shivers down Bucky's spine, memories of pain and torment flooding back. But he pushed those thoughts aside, focusing instead on the task at hand.

This was his life now.

Klaus led the way through the labyrinthine halls, his footsteps echoing against the cold stone walls. Bucky trailed behind him, his stomach churning with nausea and a sense of foreboding.

Every fibre of his being screamed at him to run. But he couldn't. He had made a deal with the devil, and now he had to live with the consequences in order to protect the love of his life.

As they reached the door to Klaus' quarters, Bucky felt like he might throw up at any moment. But he forced himself to keep moving, to

follow Klaus's lead no matter where it might take him.

As the heavy door thudded shut behind them, sealing them inside the dimly lit room, Klaus turned to Bucky with a dark smirk playing at the corners of his lips.

The expression sent a chill down Bucky's spine, a powerful reminder of the power Klaus held over him.

"Kneel," Klaus ordered, his voice commanding.

Bucky's heart hammered in his chest as he obeyed without hesitation, sinking to his knees before the man who held Buck’s life in his hands. It was a position of submission, of surrender, and yet Bucky couldn't bring himself to resist. Not when Buck's safety hung in the balance.

Bucky's eyes met Klaus' steely gaze. A shiver of fear coursed through him, paralysing him. The weight of Klaus's gaze bore down on him, searching for something Bucky didn’t know.

For a fleeting moment, doubt gnawed at the edges of Bucky's resolve. Was this truly the path he wanted to take? Surrendering himself to Klaus, relinquishing everything that made Bucky who he was for the sake of another?

The mere thought of anything happening to Buck again made bile rise in his throat, a bitter taste of guilt mingling with disgust at himself that coiled in the pit of his stomach at the thought of thinking he deserved happiness over Buck.

For Buck's safety, he would endure any torment and face any horror if it meant protecting the one person who mattered most to him. The one person who had always stood by him when others were happy to use him and throw him to the kerb afterwards without a second thought.

He kneeled before Klaus, a silent oath etching itself into his soul, his loyalty to Buck unwavering in the face of this monster.

Klaus's eyes sparked with a sinister light as he watched his boy kneel before him, satisfaction twisting his features into something cruel.

He relished in the sight of Bucky's submission, revelling in the power he held over the boy who had once dared to disobey him at every turn.

But Klaus's dominance knew no bounds, and he was determined to push Bucky to the brink and test the limits of his obedience. With a chilling smile, he issued his next command, his voice dripping with mirth.

"Strip," Klaus ordered, his tone leaving no room for argument.

Bucky's blood ran cold at the command, a surge of anxiety coursing through him at the thought of exposing himself to Klaus's scrutiny again. But he knew better than to disobey. With trembling fingers, he began to unbutton his shirt, each movement slow and deliberate, followed by his pants and boxers.

As the fabric fell away, leaving Bucky bare and vulnerable before Klaus's piercing gaze, a shiver of humiliation swept through him. He felt exposed, stripped of his dignity, and laid bare for Klaus to see.

But Klaus was not satisfied with mere obedience. He wanted to break Bucky, to crush his spirit beneath the weight of his command. And so he pushed him further, driving him to extreme lengths to prove his submission.

“Take off the bandage. I want to see all of you." Klaus tutted, clicking his tongue. Bucky shakily unwound the bandage around his waist, adding it to the pile of clothes next to him.

"Turn around," Klaus commanded, his voice like a lash against Bucky's skin.

With a sinking heart, Bucky obeyed, turning to face the wall with his back exposed to Klaus's scrutiny. He felt a rush of shame wash over him as he bared himself completely, his every flaw and imperfection laid bare for Klaus to see.

But still, Klaus was not finished. He wanted to see Bucky broken and witness the depths of his submission firsthand.

And so he issued one final command, his voice laced with sadistic pleasure.

"On your hands and knees, ass up, flower," Klaus ordered, licking his lips.

Bucky complied, sinking to the floor in a display of utter submission. He felt a surge of revulsion wash over him as he kneeled before Klaus, his every movement a testament to the depths of his degradation.

But as Klaus looked down upon him with approval, Bucky knew that he had passed the test.

He had proven his loyalty, his love, and his devotion to Buck, unwavering in the face of Klaus's cruelty.

For Buck, Bucky would endure any torment, suffer the most excruciating pain, and face any dehumanising humiliation if it meant protecting the one person who mattered most to him.

And as he kneeled before Klaus, broken and defeated, he silently vowed to do whatever it took to keep Buck safe from harm.

Klaus paced around him, his eyes fixed on Bucky with a predatory gleam. He could sense Bucky's inner turmoil, the flicker of resistance still burning within him despite his outward submission.

Klaus relished in the challenge, eager to break Bucky's spirit completely and mould him into the obedient servant he desired.

"Look at me," Klaus commanded, his voice cold and commanding.

Bucky hesitated for a moment, the remnants of his defiance simmering beneath the surface. But a quick glance at Klaus's steely gaze was enough to quell any thoughts of rebellion. With a heavy sigh, Bucky raised his gaze and met Klaus' eyes.

"Now," Klaus continued, his tone dripping with malice, "I want you to beg."

Bucky's heart sank at the command, a surge of humiliation washing over him at the thought of debasing himself before Klaus. Swallowing his pride, he licked his dry lips and looked up from the floor, his eyes pleading in submission.

"Please," Bucky whispered, his voice barely above a hoarse whisper. "Please, sir, I'll do anything you ask. Just... just don't hurt him. Anything, sir. I'll do anything. Please."

A cruel smile twisted Klaus's lips at Bucky's plea, a sadistic satisfaction coursing through his veins at the sight of his boy begging, ass up in the air. He knew he had control over the boy before him, reducing him to nothing more than a submissive lover. And God, was he a beautiful sight to behold.

He wanted to see Bucky utterly destroyed, his will crushed beneath

the weight of Klaus's command. And so he issued his final command, his voice laced with arousal.

"Say it," Klaus demanded, his eyes burning with intensity. "Say that you belong to me, mind, body, and soul."

Bucky's breath caught in his throat at the words, a surge of panic coursing through him at the thought of surrendering himself so deeply to Klaus.

But he knew there was no other choice. For Buck's sake, he would do whatever it took to keep him safe.

"I'm yours," Bucky whispered, his voice quivering. "Mind, body, and soul, Sir. I belong to you. Only you. I only want you, Sir."

As Bucky uttered the words of surrender, a part of him recoiled in disgust at himself. He hated that his voice quivered and that his resolve was so easily shattered by fear. But another part—the primal, desperate part—was relieved to give in, to stop fighting a battle he felt he could not win.

Klaus's smirk widened at Bucky's admission, his victory over the broken man before him complete. He revelled in the power he held and the knowledge that he had reduced his flower to nothing more than a shell of his former self.

"Good," Klaus purred, his voice dripping with satisfaction. "Remember that, Schatz. Remember who you belong to. Remember what that mark means."

Bucky's heart ached at the reminder of the healing words on his back and the weight of his surrender pressing down on his heart. He knew he had officially sealed the deal with the devil himself, but it was a sacrifice he was willing to make for Buck's sake.

Klaus settled into his chair behind the desk, the creak of the leather echoing through the room as he leant back, his gaze fixed on Bucky with a predatory gleam.

"You'll stay right there, Flower," Klaus ordered, his tone commanding as he gestured for Bucky to remain on his knees with his ass up. "I have work to attend to."

Bucky nodded silently, his jaw clenched with resignation and tears springing to his eyes as he watched Klaus sift through the papers

spread out before him. The cold floor sent shivers up his spine, and he fought to suppress the urge to wrap his arms around himself for warmth. He was acutely aware of his nakedness, the vulnerability of his position weighing heavily on him as he could do nothing but stay still.

As Klaus delved into his paperwork, the room fell into a tense silence, broken only by the rustle of papers and the scratch of Klaus's pen against the pages.

Klaus's final command to remain on his knees as he returned to his work was a clear assertion of dominance, leaving Bucky in a state of exposed vulnerability. The cold floor was a minor discomfort compared to the raw emotional wounds that Klaus had inflicted.

Bucky's mind was torn—between the instinct to survive and the crushing awareness that he had lost a part of his soul to Klaus. The fear that he might never be whole again haunted him as he awaited his next command, a poignant testament to the destructive power of fear and control.

He couldn't shake the sense of shame that gnawed at him—the indignity of kneeling naked before Klaus like some weak, submissive pet. He had never felt so disconnected with himself. He didn't know the man who used to be so confident and so alive. The life of every party. Now diminished to a submissive pet, nothing more than a cock warmer.

Minutes stretched into an agonising eternity as Bucky remained motionless on the floor, his muscles stiff with tension. The weight of Klaus's observant eyes bore down on him like a physical force, a constant reminder of his subservience.

Finally, unable to bear the oppressive silence any longer, Bucky cleared his throat, his voice barely above a whisper, the rough floor rubbing his cheek. "Klaus," he began tentatively, "can I... can I ask you something?"

Klaus glanced up from his work, his expression impassive as he regarded Bucky with mild curiosity. "What is it, my boy?" he replied, his tone questioning.

Bucky hesitated for a moment, steeling himself, before pressing on. "Why... why are you doing this?" he asked, his voice tinged with desperation. "Why me? Why can't you just let me go?"

A cruel smile twisted Klaus's lips at Bucky's question, a sadistic satisfaction flickering in his eyes. "Oh, my little Flower," he chuckled darkly. "You still don't understand, do you? You need me, and I'll never let you go. What if something happens to you out there, hmm? How do you think I would react?"

Klaus watched Bucky with the precision of a chess master. Each sign of weakness and each tremor of fear in Bucky was another move in Klaus's grand strategy. Control for him wasn't just physical—it was psychological. The calm demeanour he maintained was meticulously calculated to unnerve, unsettle, and make Bucky feel perpetually off-balance.

Klaus's mind drifted to his own brutal upbringing under a domineering father, who had once whispered to him, "Fear is like clay, son. It can be moulded to fit your will. Use it." These words had etched deep into his psyche, transforming him into the man he was today.

The words sent a chill down Bucky's spine, a surge of panic coursing through him at the realisation of his predicament. He was trapped, ensnared in Klaus's web with no hope of escape, and Klaus was so delusional.

And as Klaus returned his attention to his work, leaving Bucky to stew in his own misery, he knew that his ordeal was far from over.

Hours passed in agonising silence, the only sound in the room being the occasional scratch of Klaus's pen against the paper.

Bucky remained frozen in place, his muscles protesting with each minute that ticked by, but he dared not move without Klaus's permission.

He couldn't shake the nagging sense of shame that clung to him, the indignity of his situation gnawing at his insides. He knew he had to find a way out, for his own sake and for Buck's, no matter the cost.

As Klaus continued to pore over his paperwork, Bucky's mind raced with thoughts of escape. He scanned the room for any possible means of freedom, but it was futile. The windows were barred, the door securely locked, and Klaus's watchful gaze never strayed for long.

Just when Bucky's body was beginning to wane, Klaus finally set aside

his pen and turned his attention to Bucky, his eyes gleaming with amusement.

"Stand up, Flower," Klaus commanded, his tone tinged with satisfaction.

Relief flooded through Bucky as he rose to his feet, his muscles protesting with the effort. Klaus approached him with a predatory grin, his gaze roaming over Bucky's naked form with undisguised hunger.

"You've pleased me today, Schatz," Klaus remarked, his voice low and menacing. "But remember, your obedience is not optional. Cross me again, and I will not hesitate to punish you."

Bucky nodded silently, a cold knot of fear settling in the pit of his stomach. He knew that Klaus's threats were not idle and that he was capable of unspeakable cruelty.

But despite the terror that gripped him, a spark of rebellion flickered within Bucky—a stubborn refusal to be extinguished. He knew that his only chance lay in finding a way to outsmart Klaus and exploit any weakness he could find.

As the silence stretched between them, Klaus's command cut through, harsh and unmistakable. "Strip me," he ordered, his voice as cold as the air biting into Bucky's skin.

Bucky's resolve sank as Klaus commanded him to strip him. With trembling hands, he obeyed, peeling off each layer of clothing until Klaus stood naked before him.

Klaus reclined on the bed, his eyes glinting with a predatory anticipation. "Come here," he gestured languidly, his voice smooth, the command unspoken yet clear. He gestured to his softened cock, a silent command hanging in the air.

Bucky's stomach churned with revulsion at the thought of what was to come, his heart pounding against his chest like a drum of war against his will. But his voice was quiet, almost resigned. "I know what you want," he murmured, the words tasting bitter on his tongue.

With a hardened resolve, Bucky climbed onto the bed beside Klaus, his hands shaking as he reached out to touch Klaus's body. He felt a surge of disgust at the sensation of Klaus's skin beneath his fingertips, but he pushed the feeling aside, focusing instead on the task at hand.

Grimacing, he lowered his head and hesitantly took Klaus's flaccid cock into his mouth. The taste was as unpleasant as his revulsion, and he had to close his eyes tightly to block out Klaus's smug look of satisfaction.

Despite his feelings, Bucky's actions were skilled, honed by past experiences, with his hands and mouth working in tandem to coax a response from Klaus. "You like this, don't you?" Klaus taunted, a cruel smirk in his voice as he observed Bucky's expert movements.

Each word from Klaus was a spike of shame in Bucky's heart, but he pushed these feelings aside, focusing instead on the mechanics of the act. "I don't," Bucky whispered under his breath, a silent rebellion. With each twist of his tongue and suction, Klaus grew harder beneath Bucky's ministrations, his breath coming in ragged gasps as pleasure coursed through him.

"Good boy," Klaus murmured, his voice velvety. Bucky felt a surge of triumph at the sight of Klaus's arousal, a grim satisfaction coursing through him at the knowledge that he had pleased the man.

As Klaus's moans grew louder and more urgent, Bucky redoubled his efforts, determined to finish the task as quickly as possible. He knew that his only chance of Buck's survival lay in keeping Klaus satisfied and in playing the role of the obedient boy until he could find a way to escape.

And so he pushed aside his revulsion, burying it beneath a mask of want as he worked to bring Klaus to the brink of release.

Bucky's heart sank as Klaus abruptly pulled him away from his ministrations, a surge of panic coursing through him as he found himself lifted and placed on Klaus's lap. The hard length of Klaus's cock pressed against him, sending a shiver of disgust down his spine as he realised what Klaus intended.

With a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, Bucky locked eyes with Klaus, the unspoken command hanging in the air between them. He knew what Klaus wanted him to do, but the thought filled him with sickening dread. He didn’t want to do this. He’d wanted this to be over already. But Klaus never gave him anything he wanted.

"Ride me," Klaus ordered, his voice low and commanding as he gripped Bucky's hips with an iron grip, grinding up against Bucky’s entrance. "Show me how much you want to please me, flower."

Bucky's breath caught in his throat at the words, a surge of panic coursing through him as he struggled to comprehend the enormity of what Klaus was asking.

With a deep breath to give himself strength, Bucky obeyed, tentatively positioning himself above Klaus's rigid, pulsing member. He gritted his teeth against the wave of pain that washed over him as he lowered himself onto Klaus, the sensation of Klaus filling him with a sickening sense of shame.

"It hurts," he admitted in a whisper, hoping for a semblance of mercy.

Klaus's response was to tighten his grip, guiding Bucky's movements with cruel precision. "It's supposed to," he said, his voice low and menacing.

As he began to move, Klaus's hands tightened on his hips, guiding his movements with cruel precision. Bucky hissed, his teeth biting his lip against the pain, his mind awash with conflicting emotions as he struggled to reconcile the revulsion he felt with the desperate need to protect Buck.

With each thrust and grind of his hips, Bucky felt a piece of himself slip away. His spirit was breaking beneath Klaus' commands and mind games.

As Klaus' moans grew louder and more urgent, Bucky redoubled his efforts, clenching around him and picking up the pace, determined to finish the task as quickly as possible.

And so he pushed aside everything, letting his mind go blank as he rode Klaus with increasing desperation.

As Klaus's grip on his hips tightened, Bucky felt a surge of heat rush through him, igniting a primal urge deep within his core. Despite his best efforts to resist, his body betrayed him, responding to Klaus's relentless thrusts with an involuntary rush of pleasure.

With each deep, penetrating thrust, Klaus seemed to find that sweet spot inside Bucky, sending waves of ecstasy coursing through his veins. Bucky's breath hitched in his throat as pleasure washed over him, his mind clouded with a dizzying haze of sensation as he braced himself on Klaus' chest.

Moans escaped his lips, unbidden, as Klaus's relentless assault pushed him to the brink of ecstasy. Unable to control himself, Bucky

surrendered to the overwhelming tide of pleasure, his body arching instinctively against Klaus's as he chased the elusive peak of satisfaction, his thighs tightening around the man’s waist.

Every touch and every movement sent sparks of pleasure shooting through him, and his senses heightened to the point of overload. He was lost in a whirlwind of sensation, a slave to the relentless rhythm of Klaus's thrusts.

And as he succumbed to the pleasure consuming him, Bucky couldn't help but wonder if this was what it meant to be truly powerless—to be at the mercy of another's desires, to be nothing more than an empty vessel for their pleasure.

As Klaus's thrusts became more urgent, Bucky felt a surge of heat building within him, matching the intensity of Klaus's movement. The tight coil of pleasure in his core wound tighter with each movement, threatening to unravel at any moment.

With a final, primal thrust, Klaus buried himself deep inside Bucky, his body trembling with the force of his release. Bucky gasped as he felt Klaus's warmth spill inside him, a raw, primal sound torn from his throat as he surrendered to the overwhelming tide of sensation and came in spurts over Klaus’ chest.

Klaus held him close, their bodies pressed together in an intimate embrace, as they rode out the aftershocks of their shared ecstasy. Bucky's heart raced in his chest, his senses reeling from the intensity of the orgasm.

Breathing heavily, Klaus leant down, capturing Bucky's lips in a searing kiss. Bucky flinched at the sudden contact, his body instinctively recoiling from Klaus's touch. But he forced himself to remain still to allow Klaus to deepen the kiss, knowing that any resistance would only invite punishment upon Buck.

Klaus’ kiss was possessive, marking his claim. "You belong to me," he whispered against Bucky’s lips, sealing the words with a kiss that tasted of power and control.

Bucky’s response was weak, resigned. "I know," he whispered back, his voice hollow, accepting the harsh truth of his reality.

As Klaus's lips moved hungrily against his own, Bucky closed his eyes, steeling himself against the flood of conflicting emotions raging within him. He hated himself for allowing Klaus to use him in such a way

and for betraying his own principles in order to protect Buck. And for betraying Buck by feeling pleasure from Klaus.

But deep down, beneath the layers of shame and guilt, Bucky knew that he had no other choice. For Buck's sake, he had to endure whatever indignities Klaus subjected him to, sacrificing his own dignity and self-respect in order to keep his other half safe.

But amidst the chaos of his thoughts and emotions, one thing remained clear. His love for Buck burned brighter than anything in this world. It was the driving force behind everything he did—the one thing that kept him going in the darkest of times.

He only hoped that Buck would understand why he had to do this. That he would see past the lies and deception to the truth that lay beneath. And most of all, he would forgive him if Bucky ever got the chance to see him again.

Klaus gently disentangled himself from Bucky, his movements tender yet purposeful. He fetched a damp cloth and began to clean Bucky's trembling form, his touch surprisingly gentle against Bucky's sensitive, bruised, and battered skin.

But despite Klaus's careful ministrations, Bucky remained silent, his eyes fixed on his trembling hands as tears streamed down his cheeks. He felt dirty and used, even though the touch of the cloth was gentle, but to Bucky, each wipe felt like an erasure of his identity.

"You are mine, utterly," Klaus stated firmly, watching Bucky's every reaction.

Bucky looked away, tears mingling with a deep, soul-sick fatigue. "Yes, Sir," he acknowledged, his voice a mere shadow of his former self.

Klaus observed his boy’s distress with a mixture of amusement and disdain, his lips curling into a cruel smirk as he took in the sight of the broken boy before him. He relished in Bucky's suffering, revelling in the power he held over the once-proud pilot.

"Such a beautiful sight," Klaus mused, his voice laced with something deeper as he thumbed Bucky’s tears before tracing his plump, swollen lips. "You really are quite perfect, Flower."

Bucky flinched at the sound of Klaus's voice and touch, his heart sinking at the reminder of his own weakness. He knew he should feel

anger, defiance, or anything to push back against Klaus's taunts. But all he felt was a profound sense of emptiness. As if his very soul had been hollowed out by Klaus.

Klaus watched Bucky's compliance with a satisfied smirk. "Remember this feeling," he cooed maliciously. "The way you yield, the way you open up—it's how he still lives."

Bucky's response was barely audible, crushed under the weight of his submission. "I won't forget," he murmured, each word soaked in resignation.

As Klaus leant back, content with his conquest, he mused aloud, his voice soft yet carrying a sharp edge. "Each time will be easier. You'll see. Pleasure can be a powerful tool."

Bucky shivered at the implication, his mind recoiling but his exhausted body betraying him with a tremor of involuntary acknowledgment. "I don't want it to be," he whispered, a plea thrown into the air between them.

Klaus chuckled, a sound devoid of any warmth. "But your body disagrees, doesn't it? It betrays you." He traced a finger down Bucky's spine, eliciting a shudder from the contact. "It's only a matter of time before you stop fighting."

Tears welled up in Bucky's eyes as he processed Klaus's words. The reality that his own body could become an enemy was terrifying.

Exhausted both physically and emotionally, Bucky eventually succumbed to the weariness that weighed heavily on his battered body.

As he lay cradled in Klaus's arms, his breathing gradually slowed, his tense muscles relaxing against the comforting warmth of Klaus's embrace. The room fell silent. The only sounds were the faint rustling of sheets and the distant noises of the compound. Bucky lay there, feeling the weight of Klaus's arm around him, a cage of flesh and bone. His thoughts wandered to Buck, the reason for all his sacrifices.

Klaus's voice broke the reflective moment. His tone was surprisingly gentle. "Sleep now, flower. Tomorrow is another day, another chance for you to learn and adapt."

And as the shadows of sleep enveloped him, he dreamed of Buck's smile, the touch of his hand, and the promise of a reunion that felt

both inevitable and impossibly far away. Bucky clung to that fragile hope that somehow, somewhere, they would both emerge from this war together again.

Chapter 15: Crimson Reign and Silver Bullets

Chapter Notes

> Thank you all for your unwavering support and for coming along on this thrilling ride. Brace yourselves—this chapter is intense!
>
> Much love! x

As Klaus prowled through the corridors of his compound, his mind teetered on the edge. For two long months, he'd held the American pilot captive, relishing every moment of their beautiful, twisted dance of dominance and submission. Yet, despite the darkness that lurked in him, Klaus couldn't deny the peculiar affection that simmered beneath the surface for his boy.

In his own perverse way, Klaus loved Bucky. It was a love steeped in obsession, fuelled by the insatiable thirst for power and control and the need to possess the boy.

From the instant their paths crossed, Klaus recognised something unique in Bucky. Something that set him apart from the rest. It was a dangerous allure, a magnetic pull that drew Klaus deeper into the labyrinth that was Bucky.

But it was more than mere attraction. It was an uncontrollable obsession that consumed Klaus's every waking thought. He yearned to possess Bucky utterly, to unravel the complexities of his being, and to lay claim.

The mere thought of Bucky, vulnerable yet so fiercely beautiful, sent shivers of anticipation down Klaus's spine. Klaus knew he would do anything to keep his flower safe, so that nothing or no one could stand in his way. He'd tear the world apart if something were to try and take away his boy.

As Klaus stepped into his quarters, his gaze immediately fell upon Bucky, who stood by the window, his fingers tracing the cold iron bars with a distant look in his eyes. The sight of Bucky, bathed in the soft glow of moonlight filtering through the window, stirred something potent within Klaus—a fierce mix of desire and possessiveness that surged powerfully to the forefront of his mind.

"Flower," Klaus said, his voice a low rumble that echoed through the

room. “What are you doing standing there in the dark?”

Bucky turned back to face him, his expression guarded yet tinged with a hint of vulnerability that made something stir in his stomach. “Just… thinking,” he murmured, his voice barely above a whisper.

Klaus approached slowly, closing the distance between them until he was close enough to feel Bucky’s warmth against his chest. He reached out, his fingers brushing against Bucky’s jaw with a tenderness that was at odds with the evil within him. He could feel Bucky stiffen slightly at the touch, the body language not yet fully welcoming but no longer wholly resistant. A sign of progress in Klaus’s eyes.

“I understand, my flower,” Klaus whispered directly into Bucky’s ear, ensuring his words vibrated softly against the sensitive skin, which sent shivers down Bucky’s spine. “But you don't need to dwell on the past. You’re safe here with me. You belong with me always.”

Bucky’s gaze flickered, a fleeting glimpse of that fire flashing in his eyes before it was swallowed by the obedience in Klaus’s presence and the whispers in his head.

He leant into Klaus’s touch, a silent acknowledgement of the deal he’d struck with the man.

Klaus eyed his boy's lips hungrily. “I must attend to some urgent matters today,” he announced, with a hint of irritation about the disruption. “But I want you to remember that you’re safe here with me.”

Bucky held back the sigh of relief and fixed his face with a look of disappointment. “Oh?” He sighed sadly, looking up at Klaus through his lashes.

“Will you be alright on your own?” Klaus asked, his gaze searching Bucky’s face.

Bucky couldn’t wait until the bastard left, but he couldn’t afford to show that. “I’ll manage,” he said softly, straightening the collar of Klaus’ uniform.

Klaus’s lips twisted into a grim smile, his eyes lingering on Bucky’s face for a moment longer before he turned away, his footsteps echoing against the stone floor as he made his way towards the door.

“Just remember, Bucky,” Klaus called over his shoulder, his voice

tinged with a hint of warning. “You’re never truly alone. I’ll always be watching over you.”

And with that promise hanging in the air, Klaus disappeared from view, leaving Bucky alone in the silence of the room.

As Klaus’s footsteps faded away, leaving the room in silence, Bucky felt a heavy weight settle over him. Alone with his thoughts, he couldn’t shake the feeling of Klaus’s eyes watching him, a constant presence lingering like a shadow in the back of his mind.

He knew all too well the dangers that lurked within the walls of the compound. The ever-present threat of Klaus is around every corner, and God only knows how many German soldiers in here would want him dead because he was an American bomber pilot.

With Klaus gone, Bucky’s mind whirled with a thousand unanswered questions, each more unsettling than the last. What would Klaus do if he discovered Bucky’s attempts to resist his control? How far would Klaus go to keep him under control?

Shaking off the tendrils of anxiety that threatened to overwhelm him, Bucky forced himself to focus on the task at hand. Keeping himself busy when there was absolutely nothing to do and no one to talk to, he felt the oppressive loneliness wash over him. He’d always hated being alone, and Klaus had made damn sure he was the only one that Bucky had to talk to.

With a sigh, Bucky sank to the floor, his back pressed against the stone wall. As he ran his fingers along the ground, drawing shapes and seeking something, anything to distract his mind, his fingers found a small, rough stone.

It was a simple, mundane piece of earth, but to Bucky, it was a precious find. He picked it up and rolled it between his calloused fingers, feeling its weight ground him momentarily in the present.

Turning to face the wall, he hesitated. There was a risk in every action here, but something within him—a rebellious spark urged him on.

Carefully, he used the edge of the stone to carve into the wall. The stone scraped against the surface, making a soft grating sound in the quiet room. He carved ‘B + B Always’—a declaration and oath to his love for Buck. The letters were small, etched into the middle of the wall at knee height, not immediately visible to casual observation, and hidden from Klaus’s prying eyes.

Once he was done, Bucky leant his back against the words. Even though they were just barely visible scratches on a hard, cold wall, to him they were as clear and bright as if they'd been painted there.

They were words of power and promise. Leaning against them, he felt a warmth spread through his chest, a contrast to the chill of the air. It was as if Buck's presence had enveloped him—a comforting embrace from miles away.

Bucky closed his eyes and drew a deep, steady breath. The freshly carved letters pressed against his back, reminding him of the bond he shared with Buck, unbroken despite the distance between them.

Each letter hardened his resolve, whispering to him that he was not alone and that the love they shared was a beacon capable of withstanding even the most turbulent of times.

In that moment, supported by the strength of his promise to Buck, Bucky felt a clarity of purpose. The words on the wall were a silent oath, an anchor keeping him tethered to what mattered most.

And for those quiet moments, he forgot about Klaus' own words carved into the skin of his back. His love for Buck was far stronger than anything Klaus could do to him.

As hours dragged on in the suffocating silence of the room, Bucky found his amusement in the familiar rhythm of baseball plays. Memories of dusty fields and cheering crowds flooded his mind, momentarily whisking him away from the grim reality of his situation.

Lost in the world of pitches and catches, Bucky barely noticed the hours slipping by until the door creaked open, disrupting his current play. Expecting Klaus's return, Bucky looked up, but his heart sank as he saw three German soldiers entering instead, with the fourth shutting the door for them and standing guard outside.

Their heavy footsteps echoed in the empty room, sending a shiver down Bucky's spine.

He pushed himself up from the floor, his muscles tensing with a mixture of fear and apprehension as he braced himself for whatever might come next.

The three soldiers stood before Bucky, eyeing him with a mix of

hostility and curiosity. Two of them wore hostile expressions, while the third's gaze made him uneasy.

Bucky felt a chill run down his spine as the soldiers closed in on him, their hostile gazes piercing through him like daggers. He swallowed hard, trying to keep his fear in check as the third soldier's unsettling leer sent shivers down his spine.

"We've heard tales about the General's pet American," one sneered venomously. "We just had to see the creature for ourselves."

Bucky's heart pounded in his chest as he met the soldier's gaze, unable to shake off the feeling of unease that settled in the pit of his stomach. He knew he was in trouble, and there was no telling what these men were capable of.

The other soldiers nodded in agreement, their eyes gleaming with malice.

Bucky's mind raced, searching for a way out of the dangerous situation. He watched as they formed a semi-circle around him, effectively trapping him against the wall.

Before Bucky could think of a way out, one of the soldiers grabbed his arm, his grip tight and painful.

"Let's see what all the fuss is about," he growled, his breath hot against Bucky's ear as he leant in close, a cruel smirk twisting his lips.

Bucky's heart pounded in his chest as he braced himself for whatever horrors lay ahead, knowing that he was completely at the mercy of these men.

The first soldier moved quickly, his fist colliding with Bucky's stomach and sending a shockwave of pain coursing through his body. Bucky gasped for air, the force of the blow driving him to his knees as he clutched his abdomen in agony.

"Get up, American," another soldier taunted, kicking at Bucky's side to emphasise his demand. They were playing with him, Bucky realised grimly.

"Don't make this harder than it needs to be," one of the soldiers sneered, his voice dripping with disgust as he towered over Bucky.

When the next blow came—a fist flying towards his face—Bucky

managed to turn just enough so it grazed his cheek instead of breaking his nose. The pain was sharp, but his quick reaction had spared him the full brunt of the attack.

The atmosphere in the room grew still as the third soldier, whose gaze was unsettling and sharp, spoke. "Let's make sure we leave no trace of our visit," he instructed coldly. "Friedrich will stand guard outside. Be thorough but discreet. We don't need any noticeable marks."

Struggling to regain his breath, Bucky felt the room spin as waves of pain radiated across his body. He barely had a moment to gather his senses before the soldiers roughly hoisted him up and slammed him onto the bed, pinning him down with force.

The two soldiers continued their assault on Bucky, their fists raining down on him with calculated precision. They aimed for his torso and limbs, ensuring the blows were forceful enough to cause pain but not leave any noticeable bruises that might later raise questions.

Bucky gritted his teeth against the onslaught, every strike sending waves of agony coursing through his body. He clenched his fists, fighting against the overwhelming urge to lash out, knowing that any resistance would only provoke them further.

As Bucky lay on the bed, pinned down by the soldiers, he couldn’t help but flash back to the horrors he endured in the German town. The memories flooded his mind like a relentless wave, transporting him back to that day when he and his fellow soldiers faced the wrath of the enraged German civilians.

He remembered the chaos and panic that ensued as the mob descended upon them, their eyes filled with hatred and fury. They were outnumbered and overwhelmed by the sheer brutality of the assault.

Bucky felt the weight of their blows raining down upon him, each strike driving him further and further into the depths of his flashback.

The screams of pain and terror echoed in his ears. The gurgling of a throat being slit mingled with the sounds of violence that surrounded him. He could feel the fear and desperation clawing at his chest, threatening to suffocate him as he fought to survive against two impossible odds.

With each blow, Bucky felt his strength waning and his resolve weakening from their brutality. He gasped for air, struggling to

maintain his composure as the soldiers pressed their advantage, their laughter ringing in his ears like a cruel taunt.

As Bucky lay on the bed, pinned down by the soldiers, their voices taunted him with cruel words, each one a dagger to his already wounded spirit.

“You thought you were so tough, didn’t you, American?” One of the soldiers jeered, his voice dripping with disdain.

“Yeah, look at you now, all helpless and pathetic. You can’t even fight for yourself, let alone your country,” another chimed in, his laughter ringing hollow in Bucky’s ears.

Bucky gritted his teeth against the onslaught of insults, his jaw clenched in anger, even as his body quivered with pain.

“Maybe we should teach him a lesson,” the third soldier suggested, a twisted smirk in his voice that sent a fresh chill down Bucky's spine as he leant in closer, his foul breath hot against Bucky’s ear.

Bucky’s blood ran cold at the suggestion. Panic surged through him, his mind racing with fear. 'Please, no. Not this,' he pleaded internally, his pulse thundering in his ears.

“Hold him down and make sure he can’t move,” the third soldier grinned. The other two smirked and did as they were told, forcefully pinning Bucky down, their knees pressing painfully against his wrists.

As the soldier’s hands roamed over Bucky’s body, the memories of his first experience with Klaus rushed to the forefront of his mind. He clenched his jaw, fighting back the rising tide of panic and revulsion that threatened to overwhelm him, his breathing getting heavier.

“Don’t you dare touch me!” Bucky snarled, his voice thick with fury and fear. But his words fell on deaf ears as the soldier’s grip tightened, his fingers digging into Bucky’s flesh and pulling his shirt up and bunching it at his throat.

The rough fabric of the soldier's uniform scratched against Bucky’s skin, each movement a vile insinuation of the horrors to come. As the man's hardness pressed insistently against his stomach, Bucky’s mind recoiled in horror and disgust.

Bucky struggled against their hold, his heart pounding in his chest as he fought to break free from them. But he was too weak, and the third

man’s touch was relentless, his touch invasive and violating, leaving Bucky feeling raw and exposed.

With every squeeze of his ass and every lecherous caress, Bucky was growing more panicked by the second.

In a burst of desperation, driven by the instinctual need to escape the unbearable, Bucky’s voice tore from his throat, ragged and loud. “Klaus!” he screamed, the name bursting forth as a last-ditch plea for help. It was a call for help to the only person he believed had the power to stop them. Despite everything, in this moment of ultimate vulnerability, Klaus represented a twisted form of safety.

His call echoed off the walls, stark and jarring in the silence that followed his outcry. The soldiers paused momentarily, the sudden scream of their feared General's name cutting through the fog of their lust-driven actions. Their grips tightened reflexively, a shared glance between them betraying a flicker of uncertainty. The power of Klaus’s name in this war was a testament to the dread he inspired even among his own men.

But the hesitation was brief. The soldier on top of him smirked, a cruel smirk twisting his features as he leant in close, his breath hot against Bucky’s ear. “Crying out for your keeper, huh? Think he cares what happens to you?” His words were poison, intended to crush Bucky’s spirit even further.

As they resumed their assault, Bucky felt a sinking despair. The brief hope sparked by his scream for Klaus dissipated as quickly as it had surfaced, leaving him feeling even more isolated and powerless. Each touch was a violation, each whispered taunt a blade to his already crumbling resolve.

Struggling against his captors, Bucky’s thoughts spiralled. His mind conjured images of Klaus bursting through the door, furious and commanding, a violent saviour to whisk him away from this nightmare. Yet, with each passing second and with every unwanted touch and mocking word, that hope faded, replaced by the stark reality of his situation. Klaus wasn't coming.

In a burst of adrenaline-fueled desperation, Bucky’s got his hand free, and like a lightning bolt, his fist connected with the closest soldier’s jaw with a resounding crack. The man staggered back, momentarily stunned by the unexpected blow, giving Bucky the opportunity he needed.

With a wild fire burning in his eyes, Bucky wrenched his other hand free from the other shocked soldier's grasp, his muscles straining against the resistance as he broke free from their hold. In that moment of fleeting freedom, primal fear overtook him, his instincts taking control as he lashed out with all the strength he could muster.

His fists flew with a frenzied intensity, striking out at anything and everything in his path as he fought to escape the clutches of his attackers. Each blow landed with a satisfying thud and a grunt of pain as he fought tooth and nail for his survival.

But even as he fought with every ounce of strength he possessed, a nagging voice in the back of his mind whispered a grim reminder of the harsh reality of his situation. In Klaus's compound, there was no room for mercy, no room for weakness.

As Bucky launched himself at his attackers again, a sudden explosion of sound shattered the air, the deafening roar of a gunshot echoing through the room. With lightning speed, one of the soldiers had drawn his weapon, aiming it directly at Bucky in a desperate bid to subdue him.

The bullet sliced through the air with precision, grazing the side of Bucky's head. For a split second, everything seemed to slow to a crawl as Bucky recoiled from the impact. A searing heat followed, accompanied by a wave of dizziness and pain that threatened to overwhelm him. He staggered back, his senses reeling from the shock.

His hand flew to the side of his head, coming away slick with warm blood. Collapsing to his knees, Bucky struggled to stay conscious as the room spun around him. Darkness encroached on the edges of his vision, and with a final effort, he succumbed to unconsciousness, blood pooling around his head.

As the reverberations of the gunshot dwindled into an eerie silence, the fourth soldier, stationed as a lookout, swung the door open. The colour drained from his face as he stepped inside, the horror of the scene unfolding before him rendering him speechless.

In the room, a profound stillness took hold. The soldiers who had participated in the brutal assault stood frozen, their eyes wide with a mix of fear and disbelief. The weight of what they had just done was sinking in, each heartbeat throbbing loudly in their ears.

"We… we just shot him," one soldier stammered, his voice barely a whisper, as if afraid to confirm the reality of their actions. His hands

shook visibly, and the gun he had used was hanging limply at his side.

The others were pale, their faces etched with the dawning realisation of the gravity of their mistake. They had just inflicted a potentially fatal wound on the very person their deranged General cherished above all others. The implications of this were horrifying.

“General Klaus will kill us,” another soldier muttered under his breath, the words filled with dread. “He’ll tear us apart if he finds out what happened.”

Panic began to ripple through the group, each man was confronted with the likely retribution from General Klaus—a man known for his ruthless and unforgiving nature. The fear of Klaus’s retaliation was a palpable force in the room, tightening its grip around their throats and stealing the air from their lungs.

“We need to leave—now,” insisted the third soldier, his voice urgent, pushing his comrades into action. “Before he finds out. We can’t be here when he does.”

Without another word, they scrambled out of the room, their movements hurried and desperate. They slammed the door shut behind them, locking away the evidence of their actions, as if it could somehow lock away the inevitable consequences as well.

Their footsteps echoed down the corridor, each step a sombre beat in the funeral march they felt they had unwittingly begun for themselves. The corridors seemed to stretch endlessly, with each corner and shadow possibly concealing their furious General.

Visions of Klaus’s wrath flashed vividly before their eyes—past punishments he had handed out for far lesser offences played over in their minds like grotesque cinema. Each scenario was more terrifying than the last, involving ruthless methods that always ended in a fatal finish.

They knew that Klaus's retribution, should it find them, would be a fate worse than death. It would be slow, excruciating, and designed to be a message to anyone who dared cross him in the future.

As they neared the exit, the cold air of the night seemed like the final breath of freedom. They understood that leaving the compound was just the beginning of their flight for their lives. Ahead lay the near-impossible task of evading Klaus’s extensive network and surviving his inevitable hunt.

The night air, usually a relief from the claustrophobia of the compound, now felt like the chilling nail in the coffin of their futures.

Behind them, the locked door to the room where Bucky lay in his own blood was a steel barrier between them and their past lives. Ahead, the darkness of the forest offered little solace, for the spectre of Klaus' wrath was a ghost they would likely never outrun.

He stepped inside, expecting to find Bucky, his most treasured possession, waiting for him. Instead, a bloody scene unfolded before his eyes, stopping him dead in his tracks.

There, in the middle of the cold, concrete floor of his room, lay his boy. An alarming pool of blood encircled his head. The crimson stain was a stark contrast against the greyness of the ground. Klaus's heart skipped a beat, thudding painfully against his ribs as he rushed to Bucky's side, his hands shaking visibly.

"My little flower," Klaus gasped out, his voice choked with a mix of fear and disbelief. Gently, he cradled Bucky's head, his fingers trembling and instantly soaked in blood as he searched for any sign of life. His flower lay motionless, his face ashen and lifeless against the cold floor, his stillness more terrifying than any expression of pain.

Panic clawed at Klaus's insides as he tried to process the sight before him. How could this have happened? Who would dare? Rage began to boil within him, thoughts of revenge filling his mind. But first, he needed to focus on the only thing that mattered at that moment—his boy's survival.

Voice choked with fear, he leant his forehead against Bucky's, speaking in hushed, urgent tones. "Please, Schatz, don't do this to me. You can't leave me," he pleaded, his voice breaking with raw emotion. "I swear, I'll destroy anyone who did this to you. They'll regret ever crossing us."

But the silence that met his words was more painful than any cry of agony could have been. Bucky's unresponsiveness was a sharp, cold slice through Klaus's heart, the fear of loss more profound than he had ever known.

Without hesitation, Klaus scooped Bucky into his arms, his actions automatic and swift. He hurried through the dimly lit corridors of the compound, each step heavy with dread, the echo of his boots a grim

drumbeat in the otherwise silent passage.

Bursting into the infirmary, Klaus's sudden appearance startled the medical team into action. With extra care, he laid his boy down on the nearest bed, his hands never ceasing their trembling as he brushed away the matted, blood-soaked hair from Bucky's forehead.

"Save him," Klaus growled at the doctor, his voice thick with desperation and an underlying threat. His eyes were wild and fixed intently on the medical staff. "Do whatever it takes. And if he doesn't make it—" His threat hung heavy in the air. Every word was imbued with a lethal promise. "I'll make sure none of you will either. Understand?"

The doctor, faced with the intensity of Klaus's threat, nodded hurriedly, his own hands shaking as he gathered the necessary medical supplies. The room was filled with the tense, urgent movements of the staff, all too aware of the stakes that lay in their hands. Understanding just exactly who's life was now in their hands.

The tension in the infirmary was tense as the medical team worked feverishly to stabilise Bucky, their actions precise and urgent under the heavy gaze of Klaus. The air was thick with the scent of antiseptics and the underlying layer of fear that the General's presence brought with it.

As one of the doctors, a young man with a pale, nervous face, monitored Bucky's vitals, he became acutely aware of General Klaus's intense scrutiny. The oppressive atmosphere was interrupted by the quiet shuffling and murmering of the medical staff.

Attempting to assert some control over the chaotic situation, the doctor turned to Klaus with a cautious tone. "General, I must ask you to wait outside. We need space to operate effectively," he said, trying to meet General Klaus's contorted gaze with a semblance of professionalism.

The room seemed to freeze for a moment as Klaus processed the request. The very audacity of being asked to leave—the suggestion that he could be separated from his boy at such a critical time—triggered something dark and violent within him.

With no warning, Klaus's expression contorted into one of unbridled rage. In two swift strides, he closed the distance between himself and the doctor, his hand shooting out to grasp the young man's throat. The doctor's eyes widened in terror as he was lifted effortlessly off the

ground, his feet dangling as he gasped for air.

“You dare to ask me to leave?” Klaus hissed, his voice low and menacing, filled with a fury that made his words almost a growl. The infirmary fell silent, the other medical staff frozen in place, their eyes wide with shock and fear.

The doctor struggled against Klaus’s iron grip, his hands clawing weakly at the strong hand encircling his throat. “Please,” he choked out, “I... was only trying... to help…”

Klaus tightened his grip, his eyes burning with a dangerous intensity. “Help? By separating me from him?” Klaus’s voice was a dangerous whisper, his face inches from the doctor’s. “If anything happens to him because you kicked me out, I will peel the fucking skin off your body and feed it to your mother. Do you understand? I will end everyone in this room and everyone you ever cared about. I'm not leaving.”

After a moment that felt like an eternity to the onlookers, Klaus threw the doctor against the wall with such force that he crumpled to the floor, coughing and clutching his throat. Klaus towered over him, his chest heaving with residual rage.

“Get back to work,” he snarled at the remaining medical staff, who hurried to comply, too terrified to speak or make eye contact.

As the doctors got back to work, Klaus stood by, each second an eternity, watching every slight improvement or decline in Bucky's condition with bated breath. His mind was a tumult of scenarios, each one ending in the need for blood at the slightest harm to his cherished boy.

Klaus’s gaze never wavered from his flowers pale, still face. The bond between them, twisted and wrought from dark emotions and circumstances, was nonetheless a powerful tether for Klaus's sanity. Bucky was his anchor and his obsession, and the thought of losing him was unthinkable.

In the eerie silence of the infirmary, with the rustling of movement and the low murmurs of the medical team, Klaus’s world narrowed down to the fragile figure on the hospital bed. Every part of him was ready to fight against the reaper of death that loomed over his boy, ready to wage war against fate itself to keep his flower safe. The boy was his world and every waking thought. The boy was his, and he would protect that at all costs, no matter the evil inside it required him to summon.

Two agonising hours ticked by as Klaus kept a grim watch beside Bucky's bed in the infirmary. His imposing figure cast a shadow over his boy's pale but breathing body. When the doctor finally appeared, his face etched with fatigue, but with a hint of cautious optimism, Klaus fixed him with a piercing look.

"He's stable for now," the doctor said, his voice echoing slightly in the tense silence. "But he'll need continuous observation and plenty of rest."

Klaus barely acknowledged this with a terse nod as his eyes returned to Bucky, whose pale, unconscious form lay under a stark white sheet, a bandage encircling his head—a jarring reminder of how close he had come to losing him. The sight fueled a fierce resolve in Klaus to protect his flower from any further harm.

"Is he fit to be moved?" Klaus demanded abruptly, his voice sharp as he stroked Bucky's hair with feigned gentleness, avoiding the bandage.

"Well, technically yes, but it would be better if—"

"Good, we're leaving," Klaus interrupted coldly, cutting off any objections. His decision was final.

With deliberate care, he scooped his boy into his arms, holding him protectively against his chest as he strode out of the infirmary. Each step was measured and heavy, the weight of his boy against his chest, soothing the raging war in his head.

As Klaus carefully placed Bucky in the back of the truck, his mind was already racing through plans and contingencies. The need to keep moving, to stay one step ahead of any potential threats, was paramount in his mind. His hands trembled not just from adrenaline but also from a deep-seated rage. How dare they touch what is mine? he thought furiously.

Determined, Klaus climbed into the driver's seat and ignited the engine, the vehicle roaring to life under his control. They set off into the night, heading towards one of his numerous safe houses nestled deep in the German countryside—a temporary haven where he could ensure his boy's recovery and plan their next moves in the shadows of the ongoing war.

As the truck bounced over the uneven terrain, Klaus's thoughts were

consumed by dark fantasies of revenge. The betrayal by his own men and the audacity to harm his flower gnawed at him like a festering wound. They would pay, Klaus vowed silently, and their punishment would be severe and excruciating.

Upon reaching the safe house, Klaus carried Bucky inside with almost reverent care and settled him into the bed. After ensuring Bucky was as comfortable as possible and still stable, he turned his attention to retribution.

Locking the door with a decisive click, Klaus retreated to his private office. There, he convened an emergency meeting with his most trusted operatives, his voice teetering between unpredictable and simmering rage as he issued his orders. They were to assemble a search party immediately and track down the traitorous soldiers who had dared to disobey and betray him.

Utilising a vast network of informants and relying on his extensive skills, Klaus quickly pinpointed the whereabouts of the traitors. Each name was marked for death. Their fate was sealed by their own treacherous actions.

With a hungry smile, Klaus dispatched his most ruthless enforcers, seasoned soldiers who knew better than to question his orders. Their mission was clear: bring them to him alive.

As the search party set out into the chilly night, Klaus's heart simmered with a cold fury. Sitting alone in the dim light of his office, he imagined the fear that would soon grip his enemies as they realised they were being closed in on and hunted. The thought pleased him—a dark satisfaction in knowing that soon, very soon, he would have his revenge.

Back in the small room where Bucky lay sleeping, Klaus's gaze softened momentarily as he looked at him. Here was the reason for his wrath. He was the only person to unwittingly capture his dark heart. Klaus vowed silently that no harm would come to his flower again. He would burn the world down to keep his promise.

Chapter 16: A Promise Carved in Stone

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

As the bitter cold seeped through his coat, Buck huddled further into it, lifting it up and over his chin. He leant back against the makeshift library and eyed the two German soldiers up ahead inconspicuously to not draw attention to himself. Buck rubbed a hand over his face, sighing softly.

His mind was never still, always strategizing, always seeking a sliver of opportunity to have a chance at finding Bucky, or at the very least some information.

It was during one of these rounds that he overheard two German officers discussing plans for the prisoners. “They will march at dawn, deeper into the Reich, away from the advancing Allies,” one officer said, his voice barely noticeable over the yard.

The news struck Buck like a bucket of cold water. They were to be moved further from liberation, deeper into enemy territory. Yet, where most would see it as bad, Buck saw an opportunity. The chaos of a march could be the perfect cover for an escape. He needed to act fast and plan for all contingencies.

Buck hurried back to his barracks, ignoring the watchful eyes of the soldiers in the guardhouses. He slammed the door shut behind him and watched as his men swivelled their heads towards him with raised eyebrows.

“What’s up, Buck?” Crank asked, trying to peer behind Buck to see if someone was going to follow him in.

Buck sat down at the table, gesturing for the boys to come and sit down. He shared the snippet that he overheard. “They are making us march. Our boys are closing in on them, and they’re getting squirrely. They want to herd us further inland to another camp."

“We’re not going to let them herd us like cattle any deeper,” Buck declared, his eyes burning with anger. “This march is our chance. A chance to break free and head west. To get back home and to find Bucky.”

The men exchanged glances, a mixture of apprehension and excitement flickering in their eyes. They knew the risks of attempting an escape, but the prospect of freedom outweighed their fears.

“We can’t waste this opportunity,” Crank said, his voice firm with conviction. “If there’s a chance to break free, we have to take it.” The others nodded in agreement, their faces matching Buck’s own. They had come too far and endured too much to let this chance slip through their fingers.

“But how do we pull it off?” Brady asked, his brow furrowed in thought. “The guards will be on high alert during the march. We’ll need a plan.”

Buck leant forward, his mind racing with possibilities. “We’ll need distractions,” he said, his voice low yet resolute. “Something to draw the guards’ attention away from us. As soon as they are distracted, we make our move.”

The men listened intently as Buck outlined his plan, each of them offering suggestions and insights as they worked together to devise a plan. Hours passed as they fine-tuned the details, preparing and steeling themselves for the challenges ahead.

"Okay, let's pack it up! Wear the warmest clothes you got! And only pack the essentials." Buck jumped up, ordering his men to start preparing their packs.

As dawn approached, they gathered their belongings, packing only what they needed, and steeled themselves for what was to come.

With the first morning light, the camp came to life with the sound of orders being shouted and prisoners being herded into formation.

Buck's eyes met those of his comrades, his gaze strong. "We stick together," he continued, his voice carrying a note of authority. "No matter what happens out there, we look out for each other. We've survived this far, and we'll keep fighting until we're free."

The men nodded in silent agreement, their resolve strengthening with each word Buck spoke. They knew the risks, but they also knew the importance of what they were planning together.

As they finished packing what little they could carry, Buck turned to the man who had become one of his closest friends among the prisoners, Brady.

"Keep an eye out for each other," Buck said, clapping Brady on the shoulder. "We'll get through this together. I need you with me, Brady. Bucky will need you too."

Brady returned the gesture with a firm nod. "You can count on me, Buck," he replied, his voice steady despite the uncertainty that lay ahead.

With their preparations complete, the prisoners gathered near the camp gates, awaiting the order to begin the march. Around them, it was chaos. The Germans's screaming and shoving everyone, the sounds of glass smashing, and dogs barking.

The air was tense with anticipation as the prisoners lined up, their eyes fixed on the snowy landscape. The Germans were setting fire to everything in their wake behind them, burning all the horrible things they had done down.

As the march began, Buck and his men fell into step with the others, their hearts pounding with excitement and nerves.

"Remember, boys. We look out for each other, and we'll score the home run in the game," Buck said quietly, tugging his scarf around his head.

They knew that their window of opportunity was small, and they had to act quickly if they were to escape unnoticed. With each passing mile, their determination grew stronger, fueled by the hope of freedom and the thought of reuniting with Bucky.

Together, they marched onward. For Buck and his men, the journey to freedom and Bucky had begun, and nothing would stand in their way.

The cold wind whipped through the columns of prisoners as they marched, but Buck’s focus was unwavering. His eyes continuously scanned the surroundings, looking for the right moment to initiate their plan. The guards, wrapped in their thick coats, marched alongside the prisoners, their rifles held tightly. Ready to shoot anyone who broke rank.

As they approached a narrow pass and a couple of men up ahead started to cause a commotion, drawing the attention of the guards, Buck nudged Crank, giving him a subtle signal. It was time. Crank nodded slightly and signalling to Brady and Demarco.

This was the distraction they had been waiting for. Buck, along with Brady, Demarco, and Crank, seized the moment. Moving quietly but quickly, they veered off from the marching line, using the uneven terrain and the chaos around the group of men ahead as cover. Their hearts raced as they dove behind a small ridge, just out of sight of the other guards.

“Keep moving,” Buck whispered, leading the way. They moved swiftly, the snow muffling their footsteps as they made their way through the dense forest, away from the road. Every snap of a twig seemed amplified to their ears, every breath they took felt like a thunderous noise, but they did not stop. They couldn't afford to stop. To stop meant death.

They had been planning for a moment like this for months, mapping out the terrain and memorising patrol timings from the makeshift radio. Buck’s leadership and their teamwork had prepared them for this moment. The fear of capture loomed large over their heads, but the desire for freedom was larger.

As they pushed through the underbrush, the sounds of the march faded behind them, replaced by the natural noises of the forest. They knew they would need to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the march before the guards realised they were missing.

Finally, after hours of relentless trekking, Buck signalled them for a brief stop. They were deep in the forest now, far from any paths that the Germans might follow. The group collapsed into the snow, their breaths ragged, creating small clouds in the cold air.

“We’ll rest here for a minute,” Buck said, checking each of his companions for signs of frostbite or exhaustion. “We’re not out of the woods yet, literally, but we’ve made good headway.”

The men nodded, each of them catching their breath. The initial adrenaline rush had faded, replaced by the fatigue of their escape. But their spirits were at least uplifted by the progress they had made.

“We need to keep heading west,” Buck continued, pulling out a small, crumpled map from his coat. “Once we get out of this forest, it’s open fields until the next village. We can find shelter there and plan our next move.”

The possibility of finally reaching a safe haven gave them renewed energy. They knew the journey would be dangerous and challenging,

with possible patrols or even local collaborators who could spot them. Yet the thought of freedom kept them moving. And for Buck, it was the thought of Bucky that kept him focused and prepared to face whatever came his way.

As they set off again, the sun began to peek through the trees, casting long shadows on the snow-laden ground. The light brought a semblance of warmth but was also a stark reminder of the danger that came with the light. They needed to cover more ground unnoticed before nightfall.

With Buck leading the way, they continued their escape, each step taking them further from what they had all left behind.

As they advanced through the forest, Brady kept close behind Buck, his eyes darting around, always alert.

"Keep your eyes peeled, everyone," Brady murmured, his voice low to avoid drawing any unwanted attention. "Remember, we're not alone out here."

Suddenly, a rustling noise from ahead caused them all to halt. Buck signalling for silence, his hand raised in a fist. They crouched, watching as a figure emerged from the thickets. The tension was palpable, with each man ready to fight or flee, depending on the threat.

However, the figure that stepped forward was not a German soldier but a rugged, battle-worn man in a different uniform. The red stars on his fur hat and the submachine gun slung over his shoulder identified him clearly as a Soviet soldier.

"Halt! Who are you?" The Russian called out in heavily accented English, his hand on his weapon but not yet aiming it.

Buck stood slowly, showing his empty hands. "Friends," he said in Russian, then repeated in English, "We're escaped prisoners of war. Americans."

The Soviet soldier eyed them suspiciously but lowered his weapon slightly. "Americans, eh?" he replied in broken English. "You run from German camp?"

"Yes, and we need to keep moving west," Buck explained. "We have a man to find, a friend who's lost out there."

The Russian's face softened slightly from the hardened, untrusting stare. "I am Corporal Yuri Ivanovich. We attack German line two kilometres from here last night. It is risky to go west—many Germans still between you and your lines."

Crank stepped forward, adding, "We'll take any help we can get, comrade. Do you have a place where we can hide out for a bit? Maybe some food and a plan?"

Yuri nodded and gestured for them to follow him. "Come. My squad is nearby. We share food, and maybe we help each other."

Grateful, the group followed the Soviet soldier through the forest to a small, well-camouflaged encampment where several other Russians were gathered around a small hidden fire. The smell of cooking food hit them, and their stomachs rumbled hungrily. They hadn't smelled food like that in what felt like years.

As they sat down, Yuri introduced them to his squad, and Buck quickly shared their story and their goal. The Russians listened intently, occasionally nodding or asking questions.

"We can't promise much, but we'll help how we can," Yuri said after a long discussion. "Tonight, you stay with us. Tomorrow, we move south to join main force. We will see about getting you closer to your lines, but it is a dangerous journey."

"That's more than enough for us, Yuri. Thank you," Buck responded, his relief evident as he grasped the man's arm in thanks.

The men spent the night exchanging stories and strategies. Despite the language barrier, the common enemies and shared hardships bonded them. Both groups had lost so much to this damn war.

In the morning, refreshed but tense, they prepared to move out with Yuri's squad. The plan was to skirt around a known German position, taking advantage of the disruption caused by the recent Soviet attack.

As they readied themselves, Buck pulled Yuri aside. "Thank you for your help, Corporal. It means a lot."

Yuri clapped him on the back, smiling broadly. "Is no problem, American. Today, we are all brothers in this fight."

With that, they set off together, a mixed group of Americans and Russians. Each step forward was a step closer to home for Buck and

his men, and possibly a step towards finding Bucky.

As dawn broke over the forest, the chill of the early morning air was harsh against their skin. Buck, his men, and their new Soviet allies packed up the makeshift camp and prepared to continue their journey. The smell of smoky embers from the dying fire lingered as they double-checked their gear and loaded up on whatever supplies the Russians could spare.

"Remember, it's not just about speed. It's about staying silent and invisible," Buck reminded the group, his voice barely above a whisper as they set out. Yuri led the way, expertly navigating through the dense woodland that provided them cover from any prying eyes.

They moved with a stealthy urgency, aware that each moment could bring new dangers and new obstacles. The plan was to gather intelligence on a known German stronghold for information on General Klaus, but the unpredictable nature of war meant that their plans could change in an instant.

As they neared the edge of the forest, Yuri held up his hand, signalling them to stop. Through the brush, they could see a small clearing up ahead. Yuri whispered, "There's usually a German patrol here. We must be careful."

They lay in wait, observing the clearing. Sure enough, a group of German soldiers appeared, their uniforms stark against the green of the forest. The group was small, perhaps a patrol unit, but they were armed and vigilant.

Buck exchanged a look with Yuri, nodding subtly. This was a risk, but also a potential opportunity for information. Quietly, they coordinated a plan of attack. Yuri's men would initiate a diversion on one side, while Buck and his men would flank the Germans from the other.

The ambush was swift and silent. The Germans were caught off guard, and within minutes, Buck's team had incapacitated most of them. Only one remained, a young German officer who looked no more than twenty. Buck tackled him to the ground, pinning him down with a knee on his chest and a knife at his throat.

“Where's General Klaus?” Buck hissed, the cold blade pressing against the young officer's throat. The fear in the German's eyes was evident, but a smug smirk crossed his face.

“I won't tell you anything,” the officer spat out, his accent thick. “Our

General is a hero to us, and I won't betray his trust for a dirty American."

Enraged by the cockiness of the young soldier, Buck pressed the knife a little closer, drawing a thin line of blood. "Wrong answer," he growled, and with a swift motion, he slit the officer's throat, spraying him with warm blood.

Buck stared at the grim scene—a young German officer lay motionless, a dark pool forming beneath him as Buck stood over the body, his knife dripping and his expression unreadable.

Buck turned away sharply from the young man he had just killed, his movements stiff. He wiped his blade on his pant leg, a routine action that did little to hide the shaking of his hands.

Brady watched quietly from a few steps away, his eyes narrowing with concern. As the rest of the team secured the perimeter, ensuring no other threats were nearby, Brady approached Buck. His boots crunched softly on the gravel as he stopped beside him, choosing his words carefully.

"Buck," Brady started, his voice low and steady. "You did what you had to do. It was a split-second decision, and you made the right call."

Buck didn't respond at first, his gaze fixed on the darkening horizon as if searching for an answer in the fading light. Finally, he spoke, his voice rough, "Did I, Brady? Because right now, it doesn't feel like the right call. I'm losing it, man."

"It's never easy, Buck, and it shouldn't be," Brady said, clapping a reassuring hand on Buck's shoulder. "Taking a life is not something we were born to do. But remember, in this war, it's kill or be killed. That boy... he would have done the same to us without a second thought."

Buck sighed, a deep, weary sound that seemed to draw from the depths of his soul. "It's not just about killing him, Brady. It's about who we become in the process. Every time I do this, I leave a piece of myself behind."

Brady looked into Buck's eyes, seeing the torment there and the weight that Buck carried on his shoulders. "You're one of the best men I know, Buck. You make these calls so that others don't have to. You bear this burden for all of us, and it's what makes you a leader. We all follow you without question because we believe in you. We trust your judgement."

Buck was silent for a moment, absorbing Brady's words. He nodded slowly, the faintest smile breaking through the weariness as he clapped Brady on the back. "Thanks, Brady. I needed to hear that, especially today."

Brady nodded, his expression softening. "Anytime, Major. And hey, we've got your back, no matter what."

The conversation seemed to lift some of the heaviness from Buck's shoulders as they turned to rejoin the others.

As they moved out, Brady's reassurance echoed in Buck's mind, a small reminder of the loyalty his men possessed. Their path was uncertain, and the moral questions of their actions would always linger, but together, they would always face whatever lay ahead.

The brutality of the moment was not lost on his men nor on the Russians, but it was a harsh reminder of the stakes at play. They needed to keep moving.

"Let's move out," Buck ordered, his voice rough with emotion. "We're not done yet."

Brady stayed close, watching as Buck's orders snapped back with the usual precision and authority they were used to. Crank and Demarco fell into step beside him and behind Buck.

They continued their journey, the weight of his actions hanging heavy in the air. The landscape began to change as they moved out of the forest, entering a region of rolling hills and open fields. It was beautiful yet daunting, with little cover and potentially more patrols.

As they approached a small village at dusk, Yuri suggested they take shelter for the night. "We can rest here and gather some intelligence. Maybe someone knows something about the General's whereabouts," he proposed.

The village was eerily quiet as they entered, the locals peering at them from behind closed curtains. Buck approached an old man sitting outside his house, his face weathered by years of hardship.

"We're looking for information on a German General, General Klaus," Buck said directly, not bothering with politeness. He was done being polite.

The old man's eyes narrowed as he heard the name. "Ah, the butcher,"

he muttered. “Rumours say he’s taken refuge in an area to the north, heavily guarded.”

Thanking the man, Buck turned to his group. “That’s our next stop. We rest tonight. Tomorrow, we end this.”

That night, as they huddled in an abandoned barn, Buck couldn’t sleep. The day’s events replayed in his mind, the young German’s lifeless eyes haunting him. But there was no turning back. He thought of Bucky, of home, and of all they had suffered. The blood staining his hands and clothes could not be in vain.

At first light, they set off towards the north, the information from the old man was their only lead. As they neared the supposed location, the tension among them grew. This could be it—the end of their long struggle, one way or another.

As Buck and his team approached the coordinates for General Klaus' supposed location, they found themselves staring not at a single dwelling but at a sprawling compound nestled aggressively into a dense forest. The complex was surrounded by high fences topped with barbed wire, and the main gate was manned by watchtowers on either side, though no guards were visible. The whole place looked abandoned, the eerie silence belying the once heavily guarded fortress it must have been.

The team spread out, flanking the compound’s perimeter while keeping low to avoid drawing any attention. Buck signalled to Yuri, pointing towards the main entrance. They would breach there. Yuri nodded, and together they started a silent countdown.

On three, the team breached the compound, slipping through the gates with the ease of shadows merging with the dark. Inside, the compound was as desolate as the outside suggested. The corridors stood silent, doors ajar. A fine layer of dust covered everything, and paperwork fluttered in the breeze in what looked like a central command office.

They cleared each room systematically, weapons at the ready, expecting an ambush that never came. The whole place was deserted. Whatever operation Klaus had been running from here, it had been moved in a hurry.

Buck’s team regrouped at the main part of the building, which appeared to have been Klaus’s headquarters. Inside, the setup was meticulous—a stark contrast to the abandoned chaos outside. Maps

were still pinned to walls, a teacup on a desk, a chair slightly pulled out as if its occupant had just left.

Buck led the way upstairs to what he guessed were Klaus' personal quarters. The door was slightly cracked open, and he pushed it with the barrel of his gun, feeling the weight of anticipation heavy on his shoulders.

The room was disturbingly pristine, but what caught Buck's attention immediately was a dark stain on the hard floor—a dried puddle of blood that had seeped into the stone, leaving a permanent mark. His heart stopped for a moment, his mind racing with dreaded possibilities.

He knelt beside the stain, his hand hovering over it, not touching yet, as if the contact would confirm his worst fears. Tears stung his eyes as he fought the emotions swirling inside him.

It was then he noticed the wall to his left—scratched into it, almost hidden, were two initials and a singular word, "B + B, always." The same message they had scribbled into the wall of their hideout the night before Bucky was taken. A promise of love and of an unbreakable bond.

Buck's breath hitched, and he pressed his fingers against the markings, tracing them over and over. He leant his forehead against the wall, allowing himself a moment of grief, his body shaking with silent sobs.

After a few moments, he composed himself and stood, his resolve hardening like the stone of the floor stained with his lover's blood. Turning to his men, who had given him space and were quietly securing the room, he wiped his eyes with the back of his hand.

"We're not leaving until we find out where they took him from here. He's alive. I know it," Buck declared firmly, his voice gravelly with emotion. "This compound has answers, and we're going to find them."

The team nodded, understanding the significance of the room and what it meant for Buck. They set to work searching through every file, every document, and every inch of the compound for any clue that could lead them to Bucky.

Hours passed as they combed through the compound. Each room was thoroughly searched, but it was in a seemingly inconsequential office on the ground floor that Brady found a trove of documents that had been overlooked in the hurried evacuation.

Maps, transfer orders, and coded messages—they pieced together a trail that led from this compound to a location further north, a place that might hold more answers or perhaps even Bucky himself.

As night fell, they gathered their findings and prepared to move out. Buck took one last look at the initials on the wall, touching them gently.

“B + B, always,” he murmured, a vow renewed in the silent, forsaken room.

With a heavy heart but a fire burning within him, Buck led his newfound team out of the compound. It was far from over, and each step he took was a step closer to fulfilling the promise etched in both the wall and their hearts.

Chapter End Notes

> And Buck’s out! You better start running Klaus, Buck’s not going to stop until he has Bucky back.

> I hope you all enjoyed the latest chapter. Please let me know what you guys think, I love hearing from you all! □ Much love x

Chapter 17: Fractured Reflections

Chapter Notes

Okay guys this is a bit of a long one but I hope you enjoy it!

Also pre-warning there is some content in here that some might find disturbing.

Also, I made a little mood board for this story.



As Bucky's consciousness slowly crept back, a dull, throbbing pain greeted him, pulsing in sync with his heartbeat. Groggily, his eyes fluttered open, squinting against the stark, unforgiving light that filled the room. Disorientation swept through him as he took in unfamiliar surroundings—sterile walls and clinical furnishings that stood in harsh contrast to the turmoil that had engulfed his mind just moments earlier.

Memories flashed violently back to him, each more painful than the last. He could still hear the soldiers' cruel laughter echoing in his ears and feel their rough, calloused hands dragging over him forcefully, their intentions clear. And then the gunshot—a sharp, searing pain that had torn through his skull before nothing.

Gasping for air, Bucky’s hands clawed at the sheets as he tried to sit up. His heart pounded fiercely against his chest as panic took hold, his eyes darting around the room, searching desperately for any sign of danger. Every shadow and creak of the floorboards seemed to increase his anxiety with the return of his attackers.

Unsteadily, he rose to his feet, his head spinning with dizziness. He stumbled towards the door, his hands shaking uncontrollably as he grasped the cold metal handle—only to find it locked. He jiggled the handle again, hoping that it would open, but it wouldn't budge under his grip.

Desperation surged as he pounded on the door with all his might, his hoarse voice screaming for help. "Please, someone, help me!" The words ricocheted off the walls, a futile plea for rescue that went unanswered.

Tears started to well in his eyes as he slid down to the floor, his breathing jagged and uneven as he tried to suppress the mounting panic. The harsh reality set in—he was alone, trapped in this nightmarish confinement with no apparent way out.

“Please, help me... I can't breathe...” His voice broke, the sound of his own terror echoing back at him, mocking his panic attack.

As his cries for help diminished, Bucky’s breathing grew more laboured, each breath a battle against the constricting terror that squeezed him. He kiltered to the side, overwhelmed by the intensity of his fear, feeling as if each breath might be his last.

Panic gripped him like a vice, squeezing the air from his lungs until he could barely draw a wheezing gasp, and the room seemed to close in around him, the walls suffocating him. But just as the black seeping into his vision threatened to take hold, the door burst open, and Klaus stood there, his presence like a sudden jolt of electricity.

Without hesitation, Klaus rushed to his side, his hands gripping Bucky's face firmly yet gently, attempting to anchor him back to the moment. "Schatz, look at me," he commanded, his voice a solid, calming force in the storm of Bucky's panic.

But Bucky was barely there. His mind was ensnared by the terror that gripped him. Klaus's voice seemed distant, barely a whisper against the roar in his ears. All he could feel was the pounding of his heart and the rasp of his breath as it struggled to find its way through the tightness in his chest.

With a gentle yet firm grip, Klaus guided Bucky's head up, forcing him to meet his gaze. "Listen to me, Schatz," he said, his voice cutting through the chaos. "You need to breathe."

"Breathe, flower. You're safe now," Klaus continued, his tone soft yet urgent. "Focus on breathing."

Slowly, with Klaus's guidance, Bucky began to draw breaths more deeply, each one a painful struggle against the panic that held him. Klaus's steady gaze and firm grip were like a lifeline thrown into the turbulent seas of Bucky's panic.

"Listen to my voice. Breathe in and out," Klaus instructed, helping Bucky slow his erratic breathing and steady his racing heart.

Bucky struggled to regain control of his racing thoughts and erratic breathing. One name echoed through his mind like a mantra. Buck. It was the anchor that tethered him to reality, the one constant in the chaos of his panic.

With each ragged breath he took, Bucky's thoughts turned to Buck, his heart aching with longing for the familiar warmth of his presence. In the panic of his mind, Buck was the guiding light, the beacon of hope that illuminated the path out of the suffocating vice.

Every fibre of Bucky's being yearned for Buck's reassuring touch, his steady voice, and his strength. In that moment of vulnerability, all Bucky wanted was to be wrapped in Buck's safe arms, to feel the comforting weight of his arms around him, shielding him from

everything.

But as Bucky struggled to steady his trembling breaths, he knew that Buck was nowhere to be found. In his absence, Bucky was left to face his demons alone, grappling with the suffocating weight of it all without the solace of Buck's comforting presence. Instead, he had to rely on the only other person in the room right now, despite everything the man had put him through.

Gradually, Bucky felt the vice in his lungs loosen its grip. The room began to steady, the shadows in his vision receding as his breathing normalised. Klaus's presence helped anchor him in the reality of the room, away from the nightmarish flashbacks.

Through the ordeal, Klaus remained by his side, an unexpected protector against Bucky's own mind. As calmness slowly replaced the panic, Bucky leant heavily against the wall, exhausted and drained but grateful for the respite Klaus had provided.

In that moment, clinging to Klaus but longing for Buck, Bucky realised the depth of his isolation from the world. Without Buck, he felt adrift, vulnerable to the unpredictably of his mind these days.

"Buck." The name tumbled from his lips like a prayer, a desperate plea for the one person he needed more than anything.

But instead of the comforting presence of Buck, all Bucky received was Klaus's furious backlash. In a swift and brutal motion, Klaus's hand lashed out, connecting with Bucky's cheek in a vicious backhand.

The force of the blow sent shockwaves of pain rippling through Bucky's already fractured consciousness, his head snapping to the side with the impact. He recoiled from the sudden assault, his breath catching in his throat as he stared up at Klaus with wide, terrified eyes.

For a moment, the room spun in a dizzying blur, the remenants of Klaus's anger reverberating through Bucky's head like ping pong. He tasted the metallic tang of blood on his tongue, the sharp sting of tears welling in his eyes as he struggled to comprehend the sudden shift in Klaus's demeanour.

But through the confusion and fear, one thing remained painfully clear. Klaus's anger was a force to be reckoned with—unpredictable and volatile.

As Bucky lay sprawled on the floor, his cheek throbbing with pain from Klaus's brutal backhand, Klaus glared at him and shook his head. His voice dripped with malice as he spoke, his words twisted and thick with manipulation.

"See what you made me do?" Klaus spat, his tone laced with venom. "I'm only trying to help you. Why can't you see that?"

The words cut through Bucky like a knife, each one a cruel reminder of Klaus's power and control. With a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, Bucky realised the mistake he'd made. He had been blinded by his own fear and desperation, unable to hold back Buck's name in the face of Klaus.

But now, as Klaus leant over him, his eyes burning with an intensity that sent shivers down Bucky's spine, there was no denying the dark reality of their twisted relationship. Klaus's so-called "help" was nothing more than a thinly veiled excuse for his own sadistic pleasure, a means to exert his dominance over Bucky at any cost.

Bucky's heart pounded in his chest as he struggled to make sense of Klaus's words, the weight of his words a punch to the face. He wanted to scream, to lash out in defiance against Klaus's lies, but the fear held him still.

With a trembling hand, Bucky reached out and grasped Klaus's hand, pulling him closer with a tentative yet firm grip. Klaus's eyes widened in surprise at the sudden gesture, his expression momentarily softening.

As Klaus drew closer, Bucky shuffled forward, creating a small space between him and the wall for Klaus to move into before leaning back against Klaus's chest. The steady rhythm of Klaus's heartbeat echoed in his ears, a surprisingly reassuring presence through the turmoil of his thoughts.

Closing his eyes, Bucky allowed himself to relax into Klaus's embrace, the tension in his body slowly melting away as he focused on the steady rise and fall of Klaus's chest. In that fleeting moment of allowed vulnerability, Bucky found peace in Klaus's arms, a fragile sanctuary.

For now, he would play along with Klaus's twisted game, biding his time until the opportunity presented itself to break free from Klaus's grasp once and for all. Until then, he would hold onto the fragile thread of hope that whispered of freedom and escape.

As Bucky nestled against Klaus's chest, seeking both physical and emotional refuge, his voice quivered as he dared to voice the haunting question that had been gnawing at him since he'd woken up, fingers fiddling with the bandage he'd just noticed wrapped around his head.

"Are they... are they going to come back?" Bucky's voice was barely a whisper, choked with wariness at the answer. He couldn't shake the gnawing fear that the four soldiers would return to finish what they had started.

Klaus's grip tightened around Bucky's trembling form, a silent reassurance that he was not alone in his fear. "No, my flower," Klaus replied, his voice a low rumble against Bucky's ear. "They won't dare to come back. Not after what I do to them."

Though Klaus's words were meant to offer comfort, they only served to fuel the flames of Bucky's anxiety. He knew all too well the depths of Klaus's wrath and the lengths to which he would go to protect what he deemed his own.

But even as Klaus's words echoed in his mind, Bucky couldn't shake the lingering sense of unease that settled in the pit of his stomach.

"I called for you. Why didn't you come?" Bucky asked quietly.

Klaus's response was slow, his fingers tracing small circles on Bucky's hips in an attempt to soothe him. "I was dealing with...necessary things. But I'm here now, aren't I?" His tone was firm, coaxing, but underneath lay an edge of control, a subtle reminder that he dictated the terms of their reality.

"If I'd heard you, I would've come straight away, Schatz. None of this would've happened. For that, I'm sorry." Klaus murmured into Bucky's curls.

As Bucky leant into the relative safety of Klaus's embrace, his mind wrestled with conflicting emotions. The comfort Klaus offered was marred by the memory of his earlier violence, a juxtaposition that left Bucky feeling disoriented and vulnerable.

"Don't hit me." Bucky murmured, the pain of his cheek throbbing along with the pounding in his head. "Don't hit me like that. Please."

Klaus's reply was a whisper against Bucky's ear, a mix of promise and warning. "As long as you trust me, I won't need to. We're in this together, remember?"

The reassurance was supposed to comfort Bucky, but it settled like a stone in his stomach. He was painfully aware of the power imbalance between them and the volatility of his position. Klaus's kindness was conditional, hinged on obedience and submission, a gilded cage that offered safety at the cost of freedom.

His mind flicked back to the etched promise on the wall in the previous cell—"B + B Always." It reminded him that he wasn't just fighting for his own life. He was fighting for the promise he made, for the bonds that couldn't be broken by chains or bullets.

"I understand," Bucky said softly, his voice heavy with unspoken fear. The physical closeness to Klaus was comforting in the terrifying uncertainty of his situation, but it was also a stark reminder of his dependency and the potential danger that came with it.

Klaus's arms tightened around him, a protective embrace that bordered on possessive. "You're mine to care for," Klaus stated, a declarative ownership that underscored his earlier actions. "I won't let anyone hurt you again."

The assurance was threaded with an undercurrent of dominance, and Bucky felt the implicit threat that wove through Klaus's words. He was safe as long as he remained obedient under Klaus's control, a captive to the whims of this man's darker impulses.

As they sat in silence, Bucky's thoughts drifted to the soldiers and the violence promised at the hands of Klaus—a stark reminder of what could happen if he stepped too far out of line. The fear was insurmountable, a constant shadow that lingered just beneath the surface of his tentative trust in Klaus.

"Thank you," he whispered, not entirely sure if he was grateful for the protection or resentful of his need for it. Bucky's reliance on Klaus was a complex tapestry of gratitude, fear, and coercion—emotions that were difficult to untangle in the quiet moments of reflection.

Klaus's hand stroked his hair gently, a soothing gesture that belied the violent capability of those very fingers. "Sleep now," he murmured. "You need to rest."

As Bucky closed his eyes, the tornado of his feelings for Klaus—a mix of desperate reliance and wary suspicion—coalesced into a quiet resolve. He would need to navigate this precarious relationship carefully, balancing his need for safety with the urge for freedom.

In the silence that followed, the soft sound of their breathing filled the room. Bucky's last thoughts before sleep took him were of Buck. The memory of better times was a bittersweet lullaby that carried him into uneasy dreams.

In those dreams, he was free, running through fields under open skies, hand in hand with Buck, with no shadows lurking in the corners. But even in his dreams, he could feel Klaus' presence trailing behind him, a reminder of his reality waiting for him upon awakening.

The complexity of his emotions—fear, obedience, dependence, and a flickering hope for escape—wove a tight knot in his chest that didn't unravel even as sleep claimed him. In the quiet darkness of the room, with Klaus's steady breathing beside him, Bucky's mind wandered through the maze of his circumstances, each path lined with the possibility of salvation or ruin.

After ensuring that Bucky was settled and his breathing was steady, Klaus helped him back to the bed. The room, bathed in the dim glow of a single lamp, cast long shadows on the walls—shadows that seemed to sway gently as Klaus moved. Gently laying his boy down, he pulled the covers up to his chin, tucking them neatly around his body.

He stood by the bed for a moment longer, watching Bucky's eyes flutter, the dark lashes casting fine shadows down his pale cheeks. There was a tenderness to his actions, incongruous with the harshness of his earlier demeanour.

Turning away from the bed, Klaus walked to the door, his steps measured and soundless on the hard floor. Before exiting, he glanced back at his flower, ensuring he was settled. With a soft click, he locked the door behind him, the sound echoing slightly in the quiet room.

In his office, Klaus's demeanour shifted as he crossed into the realm of his operations. He sat down, leaning back in his chair as he rubbed his temples thoughtfully. The events of the week had been draining but necessary. Now, there was more to be done.

Earlier, Klaus had received word that the team he had dispatched had successfully located the traitorous rats who had dared to disobey him. A sinister smile touched his lips as he thought about the impending reunion. He was not a man to be crossed lightly, and he intended to make an example out of them.

As he waited for their arrival, Klaus's mind raced with plans. He glanced at the clock, the ticking a constant reminder of the passing time and the upcoming confrontation. With each minute that passed, his anticipation grew, a coiled spring winding tighter within him.

Suddenly, the sound of vehicles pulling up outside snapped him out of his reverie. He stood abruptly, his chair scraping against the wooden floor with a sharp screech. Moving to the window, he peered out, his eyes glinting as he saw the headlights of the returning convoy piercing the twilight.

Klaus left his office, his footsteps echoing through the empty hallways of the safe house as he made his way outside to where the traitors would be brought in.

This was the part of his work he relished—the exercise of power and the enforcement of loyalty through fear and punishment. It was a necessary part of his rule, a way to maintain order and discipline among his ranks.

The door opened with a creak, and Klaus stepped outside, his expression set in a blank look of boredom. The soldiers were brought in, their hands bound and their faces frozen in fear. They were lined up before him, their fates unspoken but clearly anticipated.

The air was heavy with grim anticipation as Klaus surveyed the four subdued soldiers at his feet in the dimly lit chamber of the safe house. Their once crisp uniforms were now dishevelled, stained with the dirt and blood of their capture. Klaus's face was set in an expression of cold resolve, his eyes devoid of any warmth as he paced deliberately in front of them.

Klaus looked at each man in turn, his gaze icy and calculating. "You have betrayed my trust. You hurt something precious to me. For that, you will all pay," he began, his voice low and even. "The penalty for such betrayal is severe." His words hung in the air, a dark promise to all who might think to cross him. Klaus' eyes, cold and unyielding, surveyed his once-loyal subordinates with a chilling detachment.

As he spoke, his mind briefly flickered back to Bucky, safe in his bed, locked away from the world's cruelties. The juxtaposition of his roles —as caretaker and punisher—was not lost on him. To his flower, he was a protector. To these men, he was an executioner. Both roles were necessary, both facets of the same man.

The atmosphere outside was electric with tension as Klaus's enforcers

moved with chilling precision under the direction of his nod. Under his steely gaze, they dragged out a metal chair to the centre of the yard, its arrival marked by a grim clanging echo.

The first soldier panicked in their grip, his fear palpable in the air as he was forcibly dragged to the centre of the yard, his heavy breathing echoing in the silence.

Klaus's men worked quickly to bind the soldier, the coarse ropes cutting into his skin as he struggled against his inevitable fate. They bought over a can of gasoline and started pouring it over the man, constructing a pyre that was both a method of execution and a stark symbol of the fire burning in Klaus' eyes. They stepped back and moved behind their General.

As the soldier writhed in his binds, Klaus produced a match and struck it alive, the small flame casting shadows across his face. Holding the match high, he looked down at his captive with a chilling smile.

"Wait! Please! I'm sorry! We didn't mean it, we swear!" The soldier begged, turning pale at the match in General Klaus' hand.

"Each flame is a reminder," Klaus hissed, his voice low and filled with murderous intent. He held the lit match with a grin, eyes locked on the soldier's, forcing him to face the instrument of his demise.

"Remember this as the fire takes you," Klaus continued, his tone devoid of empathy. "Betrayal only fuels the flames of retribution."

With a slow, deliberate flick of his wrist, Klaus dropped the match onto the man's lap. The fire ignited instantly, its hungry flames quickly climbing and engulfing the rats body.

The soldier's screams tore through the silence, a horrifying symphony in the peaceful afternoon. The screams were guttural, filled with agony. Some of the younger enforcers shifted uncomfortably, though none dared to speak or meet their leader's gaze.

Klaus stood back, watching the fire engulf the chair and its occupant with clinical interest. "This is the fate of traitors," he declared loudly enough for all his men to hear, his voice cutting through the soldier's screams. "Let this be a lesson to all who would consider such a thing. And for those who get ideas where it comes to my belongings,"

The air was filled with the acrid smell of burning, the scent of burning fuel mingling with the unmistakable odour of charred flesh. Klaus's

expression remained impassive, his eyes reflecting the fierce light of the flames as he surveyed his handiwork.

As the screams dwindled to desperate gurgles and finally silence, Klaus's expression remained impassive, his eyes reflecting the fierce light of the flames as he surveyed his handiwork.

Turning away from the now quiet pyre, Klaus faced his men, his sharp gaze sweeping over them like the blade. The soldiers stood stiffly, their faces blank, fully aware that their fate could mirror that of their fallen comrades if they stepped out of line.

As silence finally fell, Klaus's cold gaze swept over his men. "Move the body and get the next one," he commanded, the emotionless timbre of his voice reinforcing the ruthlessness of the ordeal. His order was met with immediate action.

The systematic cruelty of the executions was not just a punishment for the accused. It was a clear, brutal message to everyone present. Klaus used fear as a tool, wielding it as effectively as any weapon in his arsenal to maintain control and ensure obedience.

And to not mess with his toys.

As the second soldier was dragged to the chair, his legs buckled under the weight of his fear. The air was already thick with the stench of burned flesh. He and his comrades had just witnessed one of their own being consumed by flames, a horrific spectacle that left them shaken to their cores.

With wide, terror-filled eyes, the soldier looked around frantically as the enforcers secured him to the searing hot chair. His body shook uncontrollably as the coarse ropes bit into his flesh, binding him helplessly in place. The pile of burned remains near his feet raised his anxiety as the fuel was poured over him.

"Please, no, I beg you!" The soldier cried out, his voice cracking with fear. "I have a family, children! Please, General, have mercy!"

Klaus stood before him, matchbox in hand, his expression unmoved by the plea. The air fell silent, the other soldiers holding their breath, the air thick with anticipation.

"This is justice," Klaus responded coldly, his voice echoing. "You betrayed your oath and me. There is a price for such betrayal."

He struck the match, and the small flame flickered menacingly as he held it, illuminating his stern features.

"Mercy is for the loyal," Klaus continued, his gaze locking with that of the trembling soldier. "Let this be a lesson you carry beyond this life." With a deliberate motion, he walked over and dropped the match on the floor.

The fire ignited instantly, its hungry flames rapidly enveloping the base of the chair and climbing upward. The soldier's screams pierced the air—a desperate, agonising sound that echoed throughout the yard.

As the flames consumed him, his screams turned into pitiful whimpers and, finally, silence. Klaus watched the scene unfold with a smile.

He turned his back on the smouldering remains and signalling to his men. "Prepare the next one," he ordered, his voice devoid of emotion. The enforcers moved quickly to drag the next trembling soldier forward, the grim ritual ready to repeat itself.

The scene repeated itself again until, finally, the last man was left.

The fourth soldier was already sobbing as he was bound to the chair, his mind reeling from the horror he had just witnessed. "General, please," he stammered, his voice barely above a whisper. "I was misled, I swear. I never wanted to betray you!"

Klaus paused to look at him, his expression cold and calculating. "Lies do not absolve you," he stated flatly. "You chose your path the minute you walked into my boy's room."

With another flick of his wrist, he lit the final match of the evening. The flame seemed almost surreal in its calmness as it dropped onto the eager fuel below.

As the fire took hold, the soldier's cries were immediate, a haunting melody to the tragic dance of the flames. Klaus stood back, his arms crossed, watching the execution with clinical interest. The fire reflected in his eyes, casting him in a macabre light, a lord of fire and death presiding over him.

The execution was methodical, a demonstration of power meant to instill an unshakeable loyalty in those who remained. Klaus knew fear was a powerful motivator, and tonight's grim spectacle was designed to remind his men of the consequences of disloyalty in the most

visceral way possible.

As the night drew on and the last of the screams died down, Klaus's gaze lingered on the burning figures, his mind already on other matters. The lessons had been taught, and examples had been made. His rule was absolute, his authority unchallenged, and his methods brutally effective.

After the spectacle, Klaus issued orders to his men to clean up the remnants of the four soldiers. The night air was thick with the scent of charred flesh as they worked efficiently, removing any trace of the gruesome executions that had taken place. Once satisfied that his orders were executed with precision, Klaus turned his back on the smouldering ashes and made his way back inside the safe house.

The corridors seemed eerily silent after the harmony of screams and the crackling of fire. As Klaus opened the door to his room, he was not surprised to find the boy awake, sitting up in bed with a pale, haunted expression. The distant screams had penetrated the thick walls of the safe house, and the smell of burnt flesh clung to Klaus like a shroud as he entered the room.

Bucky's eyes widened with fear and confusion as he caught sight of Klaus, the odour overwhelming him. "What... what was that screaming?" he asked, his voice trembling, barely audible over the pounding of his own heart.

Klaus closed the door behind him and approached Bucky, his boots making soft thuds on the floor. Standing in front of the boy, he reached out and gently lifted Bucky's chin, forcing him to meet his gaze. His voice was soft yet unyielding as he spoke, "I burned them all for you. They'll never lay hands on you again."

The declaration was intense. The severity of Klaus’s actions was laid bare for him. Bucky flinched slightly under the intensity of Klaus's gaze, the reality of what had been done in his name settling heavily on his shoulders. Despite the fear, a complex wave of relief and gratitude washed over him. Knowing he was the cause and beneficiary of such ruthless actions was terrifying, yet in that moment, it was deeply reassuring.

Slowly, almost hesitantly, Bucky reached out to wrap his arms around Klaus. His embrace was an act of spontaneous gratitude, fueled by a turbulent cocktail of emotions. "Thank you," he whispered, his voice

muffled against Klaus's coat, the scent of smoke and burnt flesh strong and acrid. "Thank you for protecting me."

Klaus's arms wrapped around his boy, returning the embrace with a firmness that was both comfort and a cage. "No one will hurt you again, flower," he murmured, his voice low. "Not while I'm here."

They remained like that for a long moment, the room quiet except for their breathing. Finally, Klaus stepped back, his expression blank again. "Are you okay to stand?" he asked, though his tone suggested it was more of an order than a question.

Bucky nodded, still processing the depth of Klaus's actions and the violence done in his name.

Klaus's next words were smooth, coated with a concern that belied the cold calculation behind them. "You need a shower. You'll feel better."

Despite his trepidation, Bucky found himself nodding again, the gesture automatic and submissive. His mind was a tangled mess of gratitude and fear, each emotion battling for dominance. As Klaus led the way to the large bathroom, Bucky's steps were hesitant but obedient.

The bathroom was large, the tiles cold and white, reflecting the fluorescent lights overhead with an almost blinding intensity. Klaus turned on the water, adjusting the temperature until steam began to fill the room, the mirror fogging up almost immediately.

"Come here," Klaus commanded softly, his tone gentle but firm as he pulled Bucky towards the open shower door after stripping them both of their clothes. The heat from the water made Bucky's skin prickle, the steam enveloping him, in contrast to the chill of the air.

As the water cascaded down, Klaus stepped into the shower behind Bucky, his presence imposing. "I did what I had to do, Schatz. For us. I need you to understand that," he said, his voice echoing slightly off the tile walls.

Bucky felt Klaus's hands on his shoulders, strong and sure, guiding him under the spray of water. The water cascaded over his hair, he hissed as the hot water ran over where the bullet had grazed him and down his back, a physical cleansing that felt almost symbolic of the emotional purification Klaus seemed to demand of him.

"I know, I... thank you," Bucky murmured, the words catching in his

throat as he spoke them. The tendrils of Klaus were wrapping tighter around him, the dependency on his captor growing with each passing moment. His gratitude, mixed with his fear, was becoming a chain that bound him to Klaus more securely than any lock and key could.

“You need to show me that you understand and that you appreciate what I’ve done for you,” Klaus continued, his hands moving to turn Bucky around to face him. The intensity in his eyes was fierce, burning with an expectation that felt overwhelming.

Bucky looked up into Klaus’s eyes, searching for some sign of the kindness he hoped was still there. Feeling vulnerable yet compelled, he reached out tentatively, placing his hands on Klaus’s chest and feeling the solid muscle beneath his palms. “I do appreciate it. I do. I’m... grateful, Sir” he stammered.

"That's my good boy," Klaus murmured approvingly, his voice soft yet chilling in its possessiveness. He leant down, his lips brushing against Bucky’s forehead, in a gesture that was almost tender yet felt like a brand. “Just remember, I do all this for you. To protect you.”

As the water continued to pour over them, washing away the grime but not the guilt, Bucky felt himself leaning into the touch, into the safety that Klaus offered. It was a safety bought at a price he was only beginning to comprehend fully. In his weakened state, both physically and emotionally, the complexity of his feelings for Klaus tethered him to the man who was both his saviour and his imprisoner.

Wrapped in the steam and the sound of the shower, Bucky held onto Klaus, the very man who had orchestrated horrors for his sake. It was a moment of profound confusion and clarity, where fear and relief intertwined so closely that they became barely indistinguishable.

When they finally stepped out of the shower, the air cooler against their damp skin, Klaus wrapped a towel around his boy, his touch clinical. “You’re under my protection, flower. Always,” he stated, a declaration that was both a promise and a reminder of ownership.

The sound of the shower shutting off echoed through the cool air of the room. Klaus's touch was gentle yet deliberate as he guided Bucky towards the bed, his intentions clear.

In the silence that filled the room, Bucky's heart pounded against his chest with a mix of dread and resignation. He understood what was expected of him. His role now was to demonstrate his gratitude in the most intimate of ways—a gratitude for Klaus’s protection, a payment

for his safety.

With a heavy heart, Bucky lowered himself onto his hands and knees on the bed. His movements were a learned response to the unspoken commands that hung between them like thick fog. The air seemed to thicken with each second that passed, weighted with Bucky's conflicted emotions.

Klaus positioned himself behind Bucky, his hardened length resting on the small of his back over the words carved into his skin. A shiver ran down Bucky’s spine, not entirely from fear but from the complex tangle of dependency and something akin to desire—a desire born perhaps more from necessity than genuine affection.

As Klaus entered him, the sensation was overwhelming, not merely physical but profoundly emotional, intertwining pleasure with an undercurrent of undeniable tension.

Bucky lay beneath Klaus, his body responding instinctively to the touch that both comforted and dominated. Klaus's hands were firm on his hips, guiding his ass back against him with expertise. Bucky's mind, however, was a battlefield, torn between strong warring emotions.

"Feel good?" Klaus murmured lowly, leaning close enough that each word was a warm breath against Bucky's ear. His voice was smooth, dipped in velvet darkness, yet edged with an unspoken command that sent shivers down Bucky's spine.

"Yes," Bucky gasped out, his voice a mixture of pleasure and torment. Klaus’s movements within him were expertly calculated, pushing him towards heights of physical pleasure that were intensely powerful. Each thrust penetrated deeply, pulling a raw and primal response from the depths of Bucky's being in gasped breaths and moans.

This is wrong, one part of him screamed, a voice that sounded like the Bucky who had existed before all the manipulation and control. The Bucky, who had once known independence and strength—this Bucky was angry and resentful of the way Klaus had used him, the way Klaus had made him feel powerless and dependent. He's using you, playing you like a pawn in his twisted game. You’re nothing more than an object to him—a means to an end.

Then another, softer voice wove through his consciousness, seducing him with venom disguised as honey. This was the voice of the Bucky that had been reconstructed by Klaus’s persistent manipulation and

conditioning. He cares for you. Look at all he's done to protect you. Who else would have cared enough to keep you safe? He's your sanctuary. You need him.

With every thrust, Klaus seemed to delve deeper. Not just physically but into the very essence of Bucky's psyche, stoking the fires of this inner conflict. Bucky's breaths came in sharp, ragged gasps, his mind battling itself. Bucky's body arched involuntarily towards Klaus, driven by raw desire, yet his mind recoiled in horror at his own reactions.

With his body rocking forward with each thrust, Bucky's psyche was tearing in two. The pleasure was undeniable and consuming—it washed over him in waves, each crest of pleasure crashing harder than the last. Klaus's grip tightened, a silent assertion of his dominance as they moved together.

"You know I care for you, flower. I'm here for you," Klaus murmured as he leant in to kiss Bucky's neck, his voice a soothing balm that seemed to burn and chill Bucky's spine. Bucky could only nod, lost in the sensations, his mind a whirlwind of doubt and devotion.

The tender kisses that came with strings of honeyed venom only served to deepen Bucky's turmoil. It's all a lie. The fiery, unbroken part of Bucky wanted to shout. Each gesture, each kiss—it's all calculated to keep you subdued and compliant.

Yet, as Klaus's hands explored him with a possessiveness cloaked in gentleness, the other, broken part of Bucky ached to accept the comfort offered. It was a comfort tinged with poison, a toxic salve to his loneliness. If not Klaus, then who? It whispered desperately.

As they moved together, the room filled with the sounds of their breaths and whispers, a symphony that was both disturbing and touching. Klaus's voice was a constant undercurrent, occasionally praising and often reassuring. "You're perfect, just like that," he would say, and Bucky felt his resolve waver, the lines between forced loyalty and genuine affection blurring.

The crescendo of their movement built up like a storm. Klaus's movements became more urgent, a rhythmic dance that brought them both to the brink of release. Bucky felt himself being pushed over the edge, his entire body tense as the wave broke, pleasure quieting his mind. They climaxed together with Klaus's voice in his ear, murmuring words of affection and possession.

In the aftermath, they lay together, Klaus's arm draped protectively around Bucky. But the warmth of Klaus's body did little to soothe the chill in Bucky's heart. He felt used, even as part of him yearned for the comfort that Klaus offered. Bucky felt a tear escape his eye, tracing a hot path down his cheek.

Klaus gently guided Bucky down to lie against the pillows, turning his face to meet his gaze. The air was heavy with the aftermath of sex, and the lantern cast deep shadows across the bed, mirroring the dark complexity of their relationship.

"Are you alright, Schatz?" Klaus asked, some genuine concern seeping through his usual composed facade. "Look at me, flower," Klaus whispered softly, his voice soothing yet laced with no room to argue when Bucky didn't listen.

He waited until Bucky's eyes, filled with unspoken questions and trepidation, met his.

"Yeah, I'm fine," he lied, forcing a smile that didn't quite reach his eyes. Inside, his heart ached with a tornado of longing and regret, guilt, desire, and dread.

Klaus's gaze was intense, seeking to penetrate the last barriers of Bucky's resistance. "You did well," he murmured, offering a smile that was meant to reassure, to comfort, to seduce. "I'm here for you. Remember that. I will always be here."

Klaus studied his boy's face, his eyes tracing the contours of his cheekbones and the plumpness of his lips. Before flicking his eyes up to Bucky's own. The turmoil was barely concealed beneath the surface. His flowers eyes were a turbulent sea of confusion and conflict. Pain, guilt, and a desperate craving for affection danced within them. Klaus, ever the manipulator, recognised these signs with a quiet satisfaction —the seeds of dependency and submission he had meticulously planted were beginning to sprout in his boy's worn psyche.

Bucky's response was a silent nod, his throat tight with emotions he couldn't fully understand or articulate. The acknowledgement of Klaus's supposed care for him came with a bitter taste—a mix of relief and a deep, unsettling discomfort that settled in his chest like a stone.

Klaus continued, his hand reaching out to gently brush a lock of hair from Bucky's forehead, careful of the stitches. "You can trust me," he continued, each word deliberate, designed to weave a stronger web around Bucky's mind. "All this… it's for your own good. You know

that, don’t you?"

The gentle touch and the soft words were all part of the calculated attack of Klaus’s control against his mind. Bucky found himself caught in the tangle of his own rapidly fraying thoughts. Part of him screamed internally against the soothing lies, warning him of the danger in Klaus’s words. Yet another part, the part worn down by isolation, fear, and manipulation, clung to the promise of protection and care, however distorted it might be.

"Yes," Bucky whispered back, the word like a shard of ice in his burning throat. It was a concession, a momentary surrender to the overwhelming force that was Klaus.

Klaus’s smile widened slightly, pleased with the compliance. He leant in closer, his lips pressing a soft, calculated kiss against Bucky’s own—a kiss that marked him, that claimed him, and aimed to seal the bond of their twisted relationship.

As Klaus pulled back, his eyes locked onto Bucky’s once more, searching for any sign of rebellion, any hint of the fierce spirit he had been slowly, methodically breaking down. "Sleep now," he said gently, and Bucky felt the wave of exhaustion finally hit him.

Silently, he lay there, the fight inside him temporarily subdued by bone-deep weariness. Klaus’s presence against him was both a balm and a poison, and Bucky’s last conscious thoughts before sleep claimed him were filled with the duality of his feelings for Klaus—both the revulsion and the twisted gratitude—which formed a knot in his chest that he couldn’t untangle.

In his dreams, the battle continued. Images and feelings collided with violent intensity. He saw himself standing between two mirrors—one reflecting a strong, independent Bucky who stood tall and unafraid, ready to take on the world. The other showed a shadow of himself, broken and clinging to Klaus. The dream twisted into a nightmare, the reflections becoming distorted, mocking him.

Chapter 18: Shadows of Surrender

The first sensation that drifted into Bucky's consciousness as he slowly awoke was an unfamiliar feeling of warmth and safety. For a fleeting moment, nestled in the curve of Klaus' arms, he allowed himself to relax, the edges of his mind softened by the remnants of sleep. His breathing was even, and his body was unconsciously attuned to the rhythm of Klaus's chest rising and falling beside him after months of conditioning.

But as awareness crept in, so did reality. The safe harbour he thought he'd found in those arms was nothing more than a mirage, crafted by the very person who had orchestrated everything that had happened to him since being pulled from Buck's arms all those months ago. The warmth turned suffocating, and the safety was an illusion that his fractured mind had conjured.

Bucky's eyes snapped open, the morning light filtering through the barred window and casting shadows across the room that seemed to mock his momentary lapse. A surge of self-loathing washed over him for the vulnerability he had shown, even in sleep. His mind, a traitor to his own survival, had sought refuge in the arms of the enemy.

With a quiet, gentle movement, Bucky removed himself from Klaus's embrace. Each motion was careful not to wake the man behind him, whose presence was terrifying and, disturbingly at times, a comfort. His heart pounded loudly in his chest, a drumbeat of fear and disgust at accidentally angering Klaus and for his own weakness.

Once free, Bucky moved silently to the edge of the bed, distancing himself physically as if it could also distance his thoughts from the poison sinking itself into the fractures of his mind. He curled up there, leaning against the bedpost, wrapping his arms tightly around his knees and tucking his chin against them.

Sitting there, Bucky felt a cold draft from the window brush against his skin, pulling him further from the comfort of warmth. The chill was a welcome reprieve, helping to clear the fog that clouded his mind. v

"What's happening to me?" he whispered to himself, the words barely audible. His voice was thick with emotion, each word heavy with confusion. The safety he had felt was a testament to Klaus's manipulation—a manipulation so profound it could invade his

subconscious, turning his basic instincts against him.

Bucky's gaze fell to his hands, clenched tightly around his shins. His knuckles were white with pressure, mirroring the tension that racked his body. He felt like he was splintering from within, part of him wanting nothing more than to flee from Klaus and everything he represented, while other, deeper parts were tethered to the comfort that familiarity brought, even if it was toxic.

"This isn't me," he continued, his voice shaking. "This isn't who I am." It was a mantra, a plea for his own recognition.

Bucky sat motionless on the edge of the bed in a room that felt both sanctuary and prison. As time passed, the only noise in the room was Klaus' breathing next to him and the sounds of bombs in the distance. Bucky's eyes were unfocused, staring at a crack in the grey concrete wall as if it could supply him with all the answers.

His days had settled into a disturbing pattern that he no longer questioned. Each morning began with waking up in Klaus's arms, an arrangement that was never his choice. These mornings invariably started with whatever Klaus felt like that morning.

The initial revulsion that had surged through Bucky during these moments had slowly morphed into a numbing compliance. It was easier that way. Resistance only ever made things worse—this was a lesson Bucky had learned early and painfully multiple times over.

As he sat there, in the soft light of the morning shining through the barred window and Klaus's breathing soft and even beside him, Bucky felt a perverse sense of security. This was his reality now, one where the lines between the monster and the caretaker blurred beyond recognition.

Klaus stirred in his bed, his eyes fluttering open, to find Bucky sitting on the edge, his chin resting on his knees, and lost in thought. With a small smirk, Klaus sat up, his gaze fixed on his boy's bare back, stopping on his mark that had healed nicely, the words now pink against his smooth skin.

"Good morning, my flower," Klaus said, his voice smooth like velvet as he stretched languidly.

Bucky's eyes flickered towards Klaus, a forced smile appearing on his lips. "Morning, Klaus," he replied, his voice tight with apprehension.

Klaus moved closer, his movements deliberate, as he reached out to brush a lock of hair away from Bucky's face. "You seem distracted this morning," Klaus observed, his tone probing.

Bucky shrugged, a sense of unease settling in the pit of his stomach. "Just tired, I guess," he muttered, his eyes avoiding Klaus's intense gaze.

Klaus tilted his head, a faint smile playing on his lips. "You know, my flower, you can always talk to me," he said softly, his hand lingering on Bucky's cheek.

Bucky forced himself to meet Klaus's gaze, the weight of his gaze bearing down on him. "I know," he replied, his voice barely above a whisper.

Klaus's smile widened, a predatory glint in his eyes. "Good," he purred, his fingers tracing patterns on Bucky's skin. "Because I'm here for you, always."

Bucky swallowed hard, the familiar sense of dread creeping over him once more. He knew Klaus's words were meant to offer comfort, but they only served to tighten the vice around his throat.

As Klaus's touch lingered, Bucky felt a chill run down his spine. He knew he was trapped in Klaus's web, his venomous tendrils sinking deeper into his brain with each passing day. And as much as he tried to fight it, he couldn't shake the feeling that he was slipping further and further away from himself.

The room seemed to grow colder, despite the morning sun attempting to bathe it in warmth. Bucky's thoughts drifted, unanchored, between past and present, always shadowed by Klaus's presence.

He recalled times before this bleak life, when laughter wasn't laced with malintent and touch didn't come with pain. These memories felt like echoes from another life, fragmented and dulled from disuse.

Suddenly, the distant sounds of bombs grew louder and more insistent. It was a cruel reminder of the war raging outside—a war Bucky felt detached from yet trapped within. The explosions were like pulses, rhythmic and terrifying, dictating the tempo of his heartbeat.

Klaus noticed the subtle shift in Bucky's demeanour, his body tensing with each sound. "Scared of the bombs?" Klaus asked, his voice a mix of mocking as he wrapped an arm around Bucky's shoulders.

Bucky's response was a noncommittal grunt. He couldn't afford to show fear—vulnerability was a weapon too dangerous to wield openly, not here, not in front of Klaus.

Instead, Bucky tried to refocus his attention on the room—on anything but the man beside him. He noticed the peeling paint on the ceiling, the way the dust danced in the slivers of light, and the stale scent of damp that no amount of cleaning could mask.

Klaus chuckled softly, the sound sending shivers down Bucky's spine. "You're so beautiful when you're contemplative," he whispered, his lips brushing against Bucky's ear. "Just as beautiful as the day we first met," he murmured, kissing down Bucky's neck.

Bucky flinched at the memory. The room felt smaller now, suffocating, as Klaus's words filled every corner with their poisoned honey. Klaus's tactics were relentless and brutal, each one meticulously crafted to erode Bucky's sense of self and insert his own hold over him.

Klaus pulled Bucky against his chest, enveloping him in an embrace that felt both suffocating and strangely comforting in the chill of the morning.

"Shh," Klaus whispered softly as he felt Bucky stiffen in his arms. "Relax, my flower. I'm here. I've got you," he cooed, his voice low and soothing, like a lullaby meant to calm a child. But Bucky was no child, and Klaus's lullabies were laced with poison.

With Bucky's back pressed against his chest, Klaus continued to whisper sweet nothings into his ear. He spoke of a world where they could be together without the backdrop of war, a fabricated paradise that he painted with vivid, enticing words. "Imagine us, free from all this chaos," Klaus murmured, his lips grazing the shell of Bucky's ear, sending involuntary shivers down his spine.

But then, the tone shifted ever so slightly, and the darkness beneath the sweet surface began to bleed through. "You wouldn't survive out there without me," Klaus stated, a hint of steel in his voice now. "You need me to protect you and guide you. You're safe here with me."

These words, as soft as they were, felt like chains tightening around Bucky's heart. Klaus's affection was a cage, his love a leash.

And then, as if to seal his words, Klaus gently bit down on Bucky's shoulder—a physical manifestation of his psychological tether. It wasn't hard enough to draw blood, but just enough to mark, to remind

Bucky of his claim over him. The bite, though slight, was a clear sign of possession.

Klaus's hand moved slowly, almost reverently, down Bucky's bare chest, fingers trailing over every ridge of muscle and bone.

Bucky's breath hitched in his throat as Klaus's palm continued its descent, settling with unsettling intimacy over his boxers. The contact was both electrifying and repulsive, sending conflicting signals scrambling through Bucky's brain. He groaned, a sound muffled by the thick air, and involuntarily pushed back against Klaus's chest and hand. His body betrayed his inner turmoil, seeking more of that invasive warmth while his mind screamed for distance.

Klaus leant in close, his breath hot against Bucky's ear. His words were a whisper, but they bore the weight of chains. "You're mine, completely my boy," he murmured, his voice laced with a dark promise as his hand slipped under Bucky's boxers and wrapped around him, and he began to move in slow, deliberate strokes.

The words vile and violating were meant to degrade. Yet they carried a twisted form of comfort—familiar in their abuse. Bucky felt a tear slip down his cheek, an emblem of the war raging in him. He wanted to reject Klaus, to push him away, but another part of him, the part worn down by constant manipulation, craved the validation of Klaus's touch and words.

As Klaus continued to whisper those dark, honeyed words, Bucky lost himself to the physical sensations that overshadowed his mental protests. The pleasure was a sharp blade—wounding even as it healed—and Bucky hated himself for the weakness that allowed him to revel in it.

Klaus's strokes became more confident and possessive, as if he were claiming every part of Bucky's being with his touch. "Let go. Just feel," Klaus coaxed, sensing the crumbling resistance in his boy. His voice became the soundtrack to Bucky's surrender, a rhythmic pulse that pushed him closer to the edge.

Bucky's hands clenched the sheets, his nails digging into the fabric as he rode the waves of reluctant pleasure. With each stroke, Klaus seemed to steal a piece of his soul, replacing it with shadows that danced and whispered in Klaus's voice. The room spun slightly, with the walls closing in as Bucky moved closer to a release he didn't want but couldn't stop.

When the climax tore through him, it was with a broken moan that echoed loudly in his own ears—a cry of defeat and pleasure. Klaus pulled him close, his lips pressing a cold kiss to Bucky's neck, as if sealing a pact that Bucky hadn't agreed to.

As the last tremors of pleasure faded, Bucky was left feeling hollow and dirty. Klaus's presence enveloped him, a dark cloud that no amount of light could penetrate.

Klaus manoeuvred himself closer until they were both lying on their sides. Klaus pressed up against Bucky from behind, his intentions clear in his whispered promises and possessive tone. "Trust me," he murmured, a command rather than a reassurance, his voice low and compelling.

Bucky felt the shift and the unmistakable intention in Klaus's movements, and his heart raced.

As Klaus pushed against him, Bucky was painfully aware of the hard length pressing against his ass, grinding slowly. Klaus pushed Bucky's boxers down until they were bunched just below his thighs. Klaus spat in his hand and gathered the cum from Bucky's stomach, wetting his fingers and slowly pushing one finger inside Bucky.

Bucky groaned, an instinctive reaction that he immediately regretted as it seemed to encourage Klaus further. Klaus, hearing Bucky groan, slipped a second slick finger inside, pumping his fingers in and out slowly. He curled his fingers and hit the sweet spot inside Bucky, causing his boy to let out a small moan and push down against his fingers instinctively before tensing at his body's reaction.

"Shh, just relax," Klaus whispered right beside his ear, his breath hot against Bucky's skin. "Let me take care of you."

Bucky tried to wiggle away, discomfort mingling with involuntary arousal, already growing hard again. The movement caused Klaus to press closer, a moan escaping him that sounded too much like pleasure. Bucky's own body felt foreign to him, responding in ways he couldn't control—Klaus's expert fingers were designed to elicit exactly that.

Klaus's voice was a whisper of silk and sin as he leant in closer, his lips almost brushing against Bucky's ear. "There's no shame in pleasure, my flower. Let go. Let me make it good for you." His fingers moved with a terrifying proficiency, knowing how to coax the reluctant body beneath him into betrayal.

Bucky's resistance faltered under the dual assault of Klaus's words and touch. His brain screamed for him to push Klaus away, to reclaim his body and his autonomy, but his physical self reacted against his will, betraying his deeper desires for freedom with every shudder that Klaus's fingers provoked.

"See? Just like that," Klaus coaxed as he sensed a reluctant shiver from Bucky, a telltale sign of the body conflicting with the mind. "You do want this. You just don't allow yourself to feel it."

The conflict raging within Bucky was palpable. Each word from Klaus twisted deeper into his conscience, warping his sense of reality. The part of him that had fought and that still wanted to fight was losing ground to the conditioned responses that Klaus had so meticulously crafted. It was a manipulation of the cruellest kind, making him doubt his own feelings and his own responses.

"I don't want this," Bucky gasped out, the fight reigniting briefly as clarity pierced through the fog of confusion and manipulation. "Klaus, please…" But Klaus was relentless.

"You do," he insisted, his voice low and dangerous. "And I'm going to prove it to you." His fingers pulled out, and he lined himself up and slowly pushed into his boy's beautiful ass.

Feeling overwhelmed and utterly conflicted, Bucky's hands clutched at the sheets, the fabric twisted in his grip as he fought the rising tide of unwanted pleasure at the fullness of Klaus fully seated inside him. The head of Klaus' cock pressing up against that sweet spot inside him. The more he resisted, the more intense Klaus's efforts became, as if it were a challenge to break down every barrier Bucky had left.

The room echoed with the sound of Klaus's controlled breathing and the softer, pained whimpers that Bucky couldn't hold back. The air between them was thick with tension as Klaus slowly thrust in and out of his boy.

"Just let go, Bucky. I can make it feel good for you," he coaxed, pressing a kiss to the nape of Bucky's neck, where sweat gathered at the base of his trembling spine.

Bucky's resistance faltered under the dual assault of Klaus's words and touches. His body arched against his will, pressing into the caress that he mentally recoiled from.

"Let yourself feel it." Klaus coaxed or commanded. It was hard to tell

which. His body was a shield and a cage all at once, enveloping Bucky in a heat that was grueling. “I want to hear you say it. That you want this.”

Klaus seemed to sense his turmoil and leant closer, his lips brushing against Bucky’s ear as he spoke. “You can fight all you want, but I know you. I know what you need, even if you won’t admit it.”

Bucky felt nauseous with self-loathing and confusion. His thoughts scrambled for purchase in a mind muddied by Klaus’s relentless conditioning. Was there truth in Klaus’s words? Had he really come to know parts of Bucky that Bucky himself denied?

Tears streamed down Bucky’s cheeks now, unhindered. They were tears of frustration and capitulation. As much as he hated himself for it, part of him did want to completely give in, to end the constant fight and pain and accept whatever semblance of affection Klaus offered, even if it was as twisted and corrupted as the man himself.

Finally, with a sob that racked his body, Bucky whispered, “Please, just... don’t hurt me.” It was a plea for mercy, spoken in the language of defeat. It wasn’t consent, but in Klaus’s ears, it was enough.

Klaus’s response was softer, almost gentle. “I won’t,” he promised, a lie coated in the veneer of sincerity. “You’re safe with me, Schatz. Always.”

Klaus trailed his hands down his boy's trim waist before settling on the curve of his hips. He tightened his grip there and started to pick up the pace with his thrusts. Every thrust was pure, unbridled pleasure. His boy was so perfect and so tight. He wanted every inch of him and everything he had to offer.

The soft moans and puffs of air his flower made with every thrust only served to drive him deeper into his obsession. With a growl, he bit down into the soft flesh of his boy's throat before sucking and nipping into the skin there before following the bites with trailing kisses.

Bucky huffed out a moan and reflexively tilted his neck back.

"You're so perfect. You feel so good wrapped around my cock, my boy," Klaus growled, feeling his flower clench around his cock, the muscle gripping and sliding so beautifully over his sensitive arousal.

Klaus's rhythm became relentless, his movements almost predatory as he consumed the space around them both, his presence overwhelming.

The room was thick with the scent of their mingled sweat, and the sound of skin meeting skin rhythmically filled the air.

Bucky's breaths came out in ragged gasps, his body involuntarily responding to Klaus's calculated touches. The mix of pain and pleasure was a confusing spiral, and with every push, he felt more entangled in the web Klaus wove around him. Despite his internal fight with himself, his body betrayed him with every moan that escaped his lips.

Klaus leant down, his breath hot against Bucky’s ear. "You were made for this, for me," he whispered, each word a silken thread designed to bind Bucky closer to him. His hands tightened on Bucky’s hips, a possessive gesture that marked his claim over the boy.

Bucky felt a tear trickle down his cheek. He knew he should fight back, push Klaus away, and reclaim his sense of self that was slowly being burned away. But exhaustion was setting in, both physical and emotional, and part of him ached to just surrender, to let this complex tapestry of fear, dependence, and twisted comfort envelop him completely.

"Don’t fight it, Bucky," Klaus murmured as he shifted his angle, hitting a spot inside Bucky that made him gasp. "Let yourself enjoy it. You know you want to."

The words were a velvet caress and a barbed wire all at once. Bucky's heart ached with the conflict—the desperate need to reject Klaus's manipulation, battling the bone-tired desire to just give in. With every thrust, Klaus painted a picture of a world where pain mixed with pleasure morphed into affection.

Bucky’s mind flickered to thoughts of what could have been, of a life where he was not caught in this dark dance. Yet, those thoughts were quickly overshadowed by the intensity of the moment and Klaus’s powerful thrusts, making it hard to think of anything else.

"You’re mine," Klaus stated firmly, his voice a dark promise as he increased the intensity of his thrusts, each one designed to wipe away Bucky's resistance and make him forget who he was before Klaus. "Say it," he commanded, his tone demanding submission.

Bucky shuddered, the mix of fear and unwanted arousal confusing him. "Yours," he whispered, the word slipping out almost against his will, pushed by the overwhelming sensations Klaus elicited from him.

Klaus smiled, satisfied with the concession, and leant in to kiss Bucky

tenderly on the forehead—a stark contrast to the harshness of his actions. "That's right, my beautiful boy. Just let go. I've got you," he soothed, his voice a dangerous lullaby lulling Bucky further into submission.

As Klaus continued his relentless pace, Bucky felt the last of his defences beginning to crumble. Each thrust eroded a little more of his resolve. Each whispered a promise of safety and affection from Klaus, rewiring the remnants of his independence.

Caught in this storm of manipulation and coerced pleasure, Bucky lay beneath Klaus, the lines between captive and willing participant blurred beyond recognition. In this twisted reality that Klaus had crafted, pain became pleasure, and fear wore the mask of love, ensnaring Bucky in a bond that was as profound as it was destructive. He was seeking affection in all the wrong places.

Klaus shifted, his body covering Bucky's in an embrace as he manoeuvred one hand to rest lightly around Bucky's throat. The touch was gentle, not meant to choke but to remind his boy of the control he wielded over him, both physically and metaphorically. His other arm supported his weight as he set the rhythm.

As he moved, Klaus leant close to Bucky's ear, his voice a venomous whisper that melded threats with an undercurrent of forced tenderness. "All mine," he hissed, punctuating his words with a sharp thrust that forced a gasp from Bucky's lips.

The contrast of the menacing tone against the vulnerable position was chilling, and Bucky could feel the cold dread pooling in his stomach. Yet the dread was tangled with a confusing rush of forced arousal.

"Feel how perfectly you yield to me," Klaus continued, his hand tightening slightly on Bucky's neck as if to emphasise his point. "This is where you are meant to be, under me, feeling me inside you." His words were like venom, seeping into Bucky's psyche, meant to debilitate his spirit and reshape his thoughts.

Bucky's eyes shut tightly. His body was betraying him, responding to the rhythm Klaus set, despite the mental turmoil he felt. Klaus's mix of cruel words and calculated strokes was overwhelming, breaking down Bucky's will and making him question his own feelings and sanity.

"Let go, Bucky. Stop fighting and just feel," Klaus coaxed with a dangerous softness, his breath hot against Bucky's ear. "You can't deny this, can you? The pleasure I give you even while you wish you could

hate it."

The gentle yet firm hold on his throat served as a constant reminder of his vulnerability and of how easily Klaus could take his life if he chose to. Yet, the same hand brought an addictive warmth—a false sense of security that haunted Bucky with its contradiction.

Klaus's pace quickened, and with each thrust, he whispered more distortions into Bucky's ear. "Good boy, just like that. Show me how much you need this and how much you need me."

Overwhelmed by the complex flood of emotions and sensations, Bucky found himself pushing back against Klaus as his body began to move in sync with his demands. It was a surrender, partial and fraught with turmoil, but in the moment, under Klaus's calculated touch, it felt almost inevitable.

"Say you want this," Klaus demanded as he sensed Bucky's weakening resistance, the words spoken with a coercive sweetness that was harder to resist than any command.

Battered by the dual assault of fear and coerced pleasure, Bucky finally whispered brokenly, "I want this," not fully understanding if the words were true or if they were just another layer of Klaus's psychological vice.

As Klaus continued, a small, broken part of Bucky retreated further into the shadows of his mind, where confusion reigned and where Klaus's whispers could almost be mistaken for declarations of love.

Klaus's grip on Bucky's throat was a paradoxical mix of warning and caress, a constant reminder of the thin line between pain and pleasure that Bucky was being forced to walk. With every word that Klaus breathed into his ear, that line seemed to blur even more, the distinctions growing fainter until Bucky found himself in a terrifying limbo.

"You see, Bucky, this is how it's meant to be," Klaus murmured, his voice a velvet threat as he increased the intensity of his thrusts, each one a stark echo in the otherwise silent room. "You and me, together like this—it's inevitable."

Bucky's response was a low moan, born from a mix of despair and involuntary pleasure. The sound was a surrender—the kind of vulnerability he had sworn to never show Klaus. His mind, once a fortress, now felt like a house of cards, trembling precariously on the

verge of collapse.

As the physical sensation overwhelmed his senses, a part of Bucky detached itself, observing the scene as if from a distance. This part of him, the last part of his old self, recoiled in horror at the sight of his body betraying his inner turmoil. His mind flickered back to the dream he'd had of his two selves distorting together in the mirror. Slowly, he watched his past self flicker and start to crumble away.

"Stop fighting it, Bucky. Embrace what you feel," Klaus coaxed, his voice now a soft lullaby that was at odds with the firmness of his actions. He traced a finger tenderly down Bucky's cheek, wiping away a tear, as if he could also erase the pain and conflict it represented.

Bucky's eyes, clouded with confusion and weariness, met Klaus's gaze. There was a depth of sadness there, a silent plea for something resembling mercy or understanding. But beneath that, there was also a growing resignation, a dangerous acceptance being planted by Klaus's relentless manipulation.

"Why do you resist what brings you comfort?" Klaus asked, his tone almost thoughtful, as if genuinely puzzled by Bucky's internal struggle.

"I... I don't know what's real anymore," Bucky admitted, his voice breaking as the truth of his words hit him. The admission was a crack in his armour, and Klaus was quick to seize upon it.

"That's because you've been fighting against yourself, against us," Klaus said, tightening his hold as he leant in closer, sinking deeper into his boy. "Let me show you what's real. Let me guide you."

And as Klaus continued his relentless pace, Bucky felt that last stronghold of defiance begin to erode. Each touch, each whispered word from Klaus, sanded away at his resolve, smoothing the jagged edges of his will until he found himself leaning into the touch that he should have despised.

The cognitive dissonance was jarring—knowing he should fight back, knowing he should despise the man who had caused him so much pain, yet increasingly finding solace in the same touches that enslaved him. Bucky was getting dangerously close to accepting this as his reality.

In that moment, Bucky's mind fractured under the weight of his conflicting emotions. The split was silent, unseen to anyone but him, as the part of him that continued to resist crumpled into a million

pieces, while the other, darker part surrendered to the twisted sanctuary that Klaus promised. This division marked a profound change for Bucky.

As Klaus's rhythm steadied, he leant in close, his breath hot against Bucky's ear, his words deliberate and sharp as shards of glass. "I spoke with Major Cleven at the gates, you know," he whispered, each word laced with a venom that seemed to seep into Bucky's pores, poisoning his mind bit by bit. "I told him everything—about us, about what you've come to enjoy."

The room was spinning, or maybe it was Bucky's heart. He couldn't tell anymore. He tried to focus on Klaus's words, a part of him desperate to dismiss them as lies, but the seeds of doubt were already planted.

Klaus paused, ensuring he had Bucky's undivided attention, his voice a cruel mimicry of tenderness. "He looked disgusted, Schatz. He couldn't hide it. The disgust was clear on his face when he realised how low you had stooped... how you'd dirtied yourself with me." Klaus's hand tightened around Bucky's throat, not enough to choke, but enough to ensure he felt the threat coiled in his grasp.

Bucky's heart thudded painfully against his ribcage, his breaths coming in short, sharp gasps. The image of Buck's disgusted expression haunted him, churning his stomach. He shook his head slightly, refusing to believe, yet the fragments of his shattered trust were too sharp, too scattered, to piece back together seamlessly.

"And do you know what he said?" Klaus continued, his voice dripping with faux sorrow as he pressed his advantage. "He said he never thought you would stoop so low to let yourself be... used like this. He said you were dirty, and he didn't know you anymore."

Tears welled up in Bucky's eyes, spilling over and trailing down his temples into his hair. Each word from Klaus was a nail in the coffin of his old self, the Bucky who had fought and resisted, the Bucky who had once believed he was worthy of rescue and redemption.

"I... No... Buck wouldn't—" Bucky started, his voice a mere whisper, broken and disbelieving.

Klaus's chuckle was dark and humorless. "Oh, but he would. And he did. You're mine now, Bucky. He's given up on you. Everyone has. It's just you and me, and I'm the only one who can love you now—not despite what you've become, but because of it."

Bucky felt a chilling emptiness as his last reserves of rebellion dissolved. The man who could always endure, who could outlast any physical pain, found himself unmoored by the emotional torment Klaus so expertly wielded.

"Please... just... stop," Bucky pleaded, his voice so faint it was almost lost beneath the cruel cadence of Klaus's chuckle. His plea wasn't just for Klaus to cease his physical movements, but a desperate, silent scream for all of it to stop—the manipulation, the pain, the relentless erosion of himself.

Klaus leant in once more, his lips brushing against the shell of Bucky's ear as he delivered his final blow. "You don't need anyone else but me. I'm your world now. Let me take care of you. Let me love you. Forget everyone else. They don't want you anymore."

As Klaus resumed his slow, insidious movements, Bucky lay still, and the fight leached out of him. His tears were silent witnesses to the complete and utter collapse of his will. The twisted logic that painted Klaus as his only saviour, the only one willing to shoulder the burden of his tainted soul, seemed not just plausible but irrefutably true.

Klaus's words: "He said you were dirty, and he didn't know you anymore. He's given up on you. Everyone has. It's just you and me, and I'm the only one who can love you now. You're safe with me, flower. Always." echoed in the hollows of his broken mind, and Bucky, defeated and alone, began to believe them. His mind, once a bastion of strength and resilience, now accepted the chains of submission and dependency with a resigned quietness that was more tragic than any physical confinement Klaus could have delivered.

Klaus's words continued to drip like venom into his ears, and with each whisper, the poison spread, darkening his soul with the stain of resignation. “You belong to me now, entirely,” Klaus murmured, his breath hot against the nape of Bucky's neck, a reminder of his omnipresent control.

Bucky's mind, once tormented by conflict and the will to fight, began to quiet, an internal peace taking over. The chaos that had reigned there, fueled by hope and redemption, was being systematically squashed under the heavy, smothering reality of Klaus's words. “Buck doesn't want you... You're mine now.”

He believed Klaus. He believed that he was now unworthy, that he had been abandoned and judged by the only person he still held dear

and loved so deeply. The pain of this belief was so intense and definitive that it consumed the last vestiges of his hope.

Klaus watched with cold satisfaction as Bucky's features slackened, the fight draining out of him. He had achieved what he had set out to do. He had broken Bucky's spirit thoroughly and completely.

With a heart heavy with grief and a body racked by a cocktail of pain and forced pleasure, Bucky surrendered fully for the first time. The part of him that had clung stubbornly to his identity as a soldier, as Buck's boyfriend, receded. In its place, the persona Klaus had crafted —compliant, broken, dependent—began to solidify.

As they both neared their climax, Bucky felt a twisted comfort in the arms that held him—not for the sanctuary they offered but for the surety they represented. Klaus was right. He was all Bucky had left. The final barriers within him broke down, washed away by those words.

When their climaxes hit, it was not just a physical release but a symbolic surrender. Klaus's hold tightened around him, a physical manifestation of the emotional and psychological cage he had constructed around Bucky's essence. Bucky's faint, ragged breaths were soft against Klaus's skin, each exhaling a whispered admission of submission.

"Let go, Schatz. Let me be everything for you," Klaus whispered as he enveloped Bucky in his arms, his voice a soothing balm laced with the toxin of control.

Bucky, now adrift in a sea of confused emotions and twisted realities, nestled closer into Klaus's embrace. Each beat of his heart was a reluctant acceptance of his new reality. He was Klaus's to mould as he pleased, an object of both affection and possession.

The warmth of Klaus's body was all-consuming—a fortress and a prison all at once. As they lay there, wrapped in the aftermath of their physical union, Bucky's thoughts were quiet for the first time in months. The old Bucky, the one who fought, who resisted, who hoped, was gone, a waning shadow in the bright, harsh light of the newly formed Bucky.

"I am yours," Bucky finally whispered, the words slipping out like a sigh, a white flag raised in the silent battlefield of his mind. It was an acknowledgement of his fate. In Klaus's arms, he was shielded from the world's scorn and from the judgement he saw in Buck's imagined

gaze.

Klaus's response was gentle, almost loving. "Yes, my flower, you are. And you will always be safe with me. I'll take care of you...forever." His words wrapped around Bucky like chains, soft, silken, and unbreakable.

As they settled into the quiet darkness, the room seemed to close in around them, a cocoon woven from threads of manipulation and submission. Outside, the war raged on, but inside, Bucky's transformation was complete. The echoes of his old self were drowned out by the sound of Klaus's steady heartbeat, a reminder of his new existence under the shadow of the man who had remade him.

"You belong to me, my beautiful boy. Only me," Klaus's whisper was soft, yet it carried an undeniable claim over Bucky's broken spirit. It was a statement that seemed to seal Bucky's fate, spoken with an affection that was skewed and tainted but resonated deeply with Bucky's shattered sense of self-worth.

Exhausted and emotionally spent, Bucky felt a perverse sense of relief in giving in. He closed his eyes, trying to block out everything but the sound of Klaus's voice, which had become a twisted lifeline in the chaos of his mind. Slowly, he curled into Klaus, making himself small, trying to fit perfectly against the contours of the only person who, he believed, could love him.

In that moment, Bucky felt a horrifying comfort in the warmth of Klaus's body. It was a warmth he knew he shouldn't trust, a warmth that came with too much cost, but it was warmth nonetheless—a stark contrast to the cold abandonment he felt when he pictured the faces of everyone he once loved, faces marred by judgement and disgust.

Klaus loved him. That was what Bucky clung to. It didn't matter that the love was twisted and dark, because maybe, Bucky thought despairingly, that was all he was worth now. Maybe he was too sullied and too broken to deserve anything better. The thought was a dagger to his heart, but it was one he couldn't pull free from.

'And maybe I could love him too, right?' Bucky thought, a tear slipping down his cheek as he pressed closer to Klaus. The idea was a betrayal of everything he had once held dear, but those things felt like they belonged to another lifetime, to another Bucky—one who hadn't been tarnished by the harsh realities of his existence.

He didn't deserve to be truly happy, not anymore. That kind of love, the kind he had dreamed about and believed in once, seemed like a cruel joke now, far out of reach for someone as "dirty" and tainted as he believed himself to be. So, would it really hurt to accept the only kind of love he thought he was worthy of? The love that Klaus offered was possessive, controlling, but consistent.

Klaus's voice broke through his reverie, affirming his twisted devotion. "I'm here, flower. I'm the only one you need. Let me love you, every part of you" he murmured, and Bucky felt the last walls of resistance crumble within him.

A small, broken part of him whispered that this wasn't right, that the love Klaus offered was no love at all—it was ownership. But Bucky was too tired to listen. Instead, he whispered back, almost inaudibly, "Okay."

It was a surrender, a resignation to his fate, decided by the warped logic that any love—no matter how corrupted—was better than none. As he buried his face deeper into Klaus's chest, trying to ignore the sick feeling in the pit of his stomach, Bucky tried to convince himself that this was where he belonged.

Underneath the acceptance, however, lay a kernel of sorrow, a mournful acknowledgement of the loss of the true Bucky, the one who had hoped and fought for something purer, something genuinely loving. That Bucky seemed like a ghost now, an echo of laughter and light that was fading fast.

Klaus's arms wrapped around him, a cage gilded with false promises of protection and love. And as Bucky settled into the embrace, he couldn't help but feel the weight of the choices and circumstances in his life that had led him here, to this moment where he felt his soul finally dim in the shadow of his surrender.

Chapter 19: Whispers in the Ruins

The world seemed quieter now, somehow emptier, as Buck walked through the deserted streets of the war-torn town. Each step seemed to echo in his ears, as he walked through the town's ruins, stones and ashes crumbling underneath his boots. The distant rumble of bombs, once jarring, had become like muffled thunder—far off and impersonal, carrying the scent of destruction and death from miles away. They didn't reach him here, not really—not like they used to.

Once upon a time, every explosion reverberated through his bones, a visceral reminder of the relentless war tearing his world apart. Now, they had dulled to mere background noise—a rhythmic soundtrack to the vast emptiness left in his heart by Bucky's absence. His surroundings, once vibrant and full of life, now mirrored the bleak, greyscale of his grief and loss. Every colour drained away with the loss of the one who had painted his world in brilliant hues with his presence.

With each step through the broken town, the emptiness within Buck seemed to mirror the destruction around him. Buildings, once full of life and laughter, now stood hollow and shattered, their empty, broken windows mirroring the hollow ache pulsating in his chest. His heart felt like the town after a relentless battle-scarred and barren.

Buck couldn't shake the oppressive heaviness that had enveloped him since that last, haunting encounter with Bucky, tightly held in General Klaus's cruel grasp. The image was seared painfully into his memory—Bucky, so visibly bruised and broken. It tore at him to see the man he loved with every fibre of his being appear so scared, so lost, and so profoundly hurt.

He had tried to reach out, to bridge the chasm that the General had crafted around Bucky's mind, but the wall between them had been just out of reach, as tangible as the bombed-out ruins he navigated daily. The General's venomous words, designed to hurt and torment, still echoed in his ears, painting Bucky as someone unrecognisable, tainted, and supposedly content beneath that monster.

Buck had never believed Klaus's lies about Bucky's alleged willingness. His Bucky was strong and resilient, enduring unspeakable things, perhaps even believing he was protecting Buck by doing so. The thought was a blade twisting in Buck's gut, a cruel reminder of his failure to shield Bucky from such profound evil, manipulation, and

pain.

Months had passed, agonising and endless months since he'd last seen Bucky. God, the not knowing was the worst part. Was Bucky okay? Was he even still alive? The uncertainty gnawed at him relentlessly, an ever-present shadow that threatened to consume him from within. It was torture, pure and simple.

The world fell away, and his breath came in harsh gasps, visible in the frigid air, as the scene replayed over and over in his mind. An agonising loop that tightened around his chest with the cruelty of a vice.

"No, Bucky, don't," he had choked out, the taste of blood metallic and thick on his tongue.

He remembered spitting out the pooling blood in his mouth, his body driven by a desperate, primal need to reach Bucky. The snow beneath him had stained crimson as he crawled towards the gate, his hand outstretched, reaching through the cold bars for the man he loved.

Bucky had turned at the sound of Buck's voice. His eyes, the deep wells of kindness that Buck knew better than his own, brimming with tears. The sight of Buck, beaten and broken yet still filled with a fierce, undying need to reach him, had seemed to pierce Bucky straight through. It was a look of pure love, of unspeakable devotion, and it was then that Buck realised the terrible depth of the sacrifice Bucky was prepared to make.

In Bucky's eyes, once vibrant and full of life, now dulled by suffering yet burning with an unquenchable fire, Buck had seen a farewell. "I love you, Buck. God, I love you so fucking much," Bucky had said, his voice breaking, each word thick with their shared agony. "I'm so sorry, sorry for everything." His hands had been gentle as they wiped the blood from Buck’s face, the touch feather-light yet laden with an unbearable finality.

The promise of love had been there in every touch, every look, and every word they shared in those fleeting moments. But so had been the promise of pain, of a loss so profound that Buck felt it might very well break him, and it had.

Bucky's parting words had been a plea, a desperate last bid from the depths of his soul. "Promise me, Buck. Promise me you'll find a way to go on, even if I can't come back to you. Promise me you'll survive this war and live..."

The memory was a blade that turned painfully inside Buck, each twist a fresh torture. He had never made that promise. He couldn't. Instead, he had sworn to find Bucky, to bring him home, and to restore the vibrant colour to their grayscale world. It was a vow that propelled him forward now, through the heart of Germany, through the blood, death, pain, and desperation.

The promises of protection he'd made Bucky now haunt him like spectres of his failure. The guilt was a constant ache, pulsating with every heartbeat, each throb a suffocating reminder of his broken oath to the love of his life.

Drawing his coat tighter around him against the chill of the encroaching night, he leant against the cold, rough brick, allowing himself a moment to close his eyes and just remember—to feel Bucky's laughter echoing in his mind rather than the sombre silence that now filled his days.

A soft rustling sound startled him from his reverie—not far from where he stood, a stray dog emerged from the shadows. Its coat was matted, and its eyes were wary yet hopeful. Buck watched as it cautiously approached, sniffing the air as if searching for something. Instinctively, Buck reached into his pocket and pulled out a small piece of jerky from his pocket that he'd been saving. He tossed it towards the dog, who sniffed it tentatively before chewing it down.

“Not much different, are we?” Buck murmured, watching the dog with a sad sort of kinship. “Both of us are just looking for something in all this mess.”

The dog moved closer, its tail wagging hesitantly. Buck crouched down and extended a hand, letting the dog sniff him. When it licked his hand, the rough warmth of the dog’s tongue against his skin was a simple comfort that reminded him of Meatball.

“You need a name, huh? How about... Scout?” Buck suggested, a faint smile touching his lips as the dog’s tail wagged more vigorously.

Together, they walked back towards the edge of the town, the sound of Scout’s nails clicking on the concrete oddly soothing against the whirlwind of his thoughts.
The afternoon air was suffused with the scent of smoke and dust as Buck returned to their makeshift command post, set up in the remnants of a bombed-out building. Scout, the stray dog he had befriended among the ruins, padded quietly by his side, his presence a

small comfort amid the tension of the war zone.

As he approached the building, the low murmur of his men's voices filtered out into the fading daylight. The interior was dimly lit by a small hidden fire, casting uneven shadows over the assembled group. Crank, Brady, and Demarco were hunched over a large, worn table that was littered with maps and documents from the General's previous compound, their faces etched with concentration and fatigue. They were joined by several members of the Russians, including their leader, Yuri.

Crank noticed him first. The lines of worry eased slightly on his face as he acknowledged Buck's arrival with a nod. "Major, you're back," he stated, his voice a mix of relief and urgency. Crank noticed the new companion by his side but only raised his eyebrows in surprise before focusing back on Buck.

Buck nodded, his gaze sweeping over the maps strewn across the table. Each map was annotated with various marks and notes, symbols of their relentless search for any clue that could lead them to General Klaus and Bucky. Scout, sensing the seriousness of the moment, settled quietly at Buck's side.

"What's the latest?" Buck asked, his voice low and tired as he surveyed the chaotic sprawl of information.

Brady gestured towards a map centred on a particularly rugged area. "We've been combing through recon reports and intel from locals and the Russians, but no concrete leads yet," he reported, his finger tracing along a river that snaked through the forested terrain. "The bastard has covered his tracks well. He could be holed up in any of these sectors."

Demarco chimed in, his brow furrowed in frustration. "The Soviets have provided some insights into possible supply routes that could be supporting his operations. We're cross-referencing them with recent activity spikes."

The discussion was briefly interrupted by Demarco handing Scout a scrap of food, which the dog accepted gratefully, his tail wagging in the dim light. Buck watched the interaction, a faint smile touching his lips despite the situation. Scout had become more than just a companion in the little time he'd been here. He was a silent morale booster, a beacon of loyalty and hope in their fragmented world.

"We need to tighten our net," Buck stated, turning back to the maps.

"Klaus won't stay hidden for long. We need to anticipate his moves. We need to think like he does."

As the men nodded, rallying around the renewed focus, Buck felt the weight of leadership pressing down on him in exhaustion. The stakes were high, not just for him but for all of them. Each man in this room, bound by duty and driven by their own reasons, relied on his decisions and his ability to keep them alive.

One of the Russians, Lieutenant Ivanov, leant forward, pointing to a marked area on another map. “These locations are well-defended and likely to be used by someone who understands the importance of secrecy and defence. We suggest focusing on these for any unusual activities.”

Buck absorbed the information, his mind racing through the possibilities. “Keep monitoring any movements in these sectors. We need a break, and we need it soon,” he commanded, his voice hardening with each word.

The team nodded in agreement, their faces set in grim determination. The loyalty and unyielding willpower in the room was palpable, each man united by the shared urgency of their mission and the need to finally take down the General. For Bucky, and for all the pain the man had caused thousands of people in the war. They returned to their maps and reports, the room buzzing with the low hum of strategic discussions.

As the evening wore on, Buck stepped outside to clear his head. The night air was crisp, and as he took a deep breath, the scent of smoke and pine mingled together, grounding him. He looked up at the sky and the stars, and his thoughts turned to Bucky. The pain of their separation was sharp and unyielding in its torment.

“Hang on, Bucky. I'm coming for you,” he whispered into the darkness, a silent promise to the night. Scout nudged his hand with his nose, offering what comfort he could.

With a deep breath, Buck returned back inside, ready to delve back into the maps and reports. The night would be long, and sleep would not come easy, but he was determined to get Bucky back, and he wouldn't stop or rest until he had. Every moment they spent in uncertainty was a moment too long or a moment Bucky didn't have. He would find Bucky, no matter what it took.

Together, they stood ready to confront whatever challenges lay ahead,

united by a mission that transcended the mere mechanics of war, pain, and whatever else they had to endure. They were striving to bring back the man who had been their cornerstone, the one who had held them together through humour and a pure heart in the darkest of times. More than mere soldiers, they were brothers bound by a shared goal, each fighting for a cause that reached far beyond any battlefield.

For Buck, this battle was deeply personal, fueled by a love that burned fiercely, undimmed by the shadows cast by war and by General Klaus's hands. This love, this unyielding force of love and devotion to Bucky, drove him not just to fulfil his duty but to restore the light that Bucky had brought into their lives—his life. It was a wildfire love that refused to be extinguished, a beacon guiding him through the darkest hours, propelling him towards a reunion that was both a hope and a promise he refused to break.

Chapter 20: We'll Meet Again

Chapter Notes

These two songs resonated deeply with me in connection to Bucky's circumstances.

"We'll Meet Again" by Vera Lynn
"When I Grow too Old to Dream" by Vera Lynn

The night was unusually still. It was the kind of silence that felt charged, as if the air itself was holding its breath, waiting for something to happen. Bucky lay awake, unable to sleep due to his racing thoughts. Klaus's breathing was steady beside him, the only constant in this complicated web he was entangled in.

Suddenly, the stillness was shattered by the distant, unmistakable whine and roar of plane engines, growing louder as they approached. Bucky's heart skipped a beat, a cold dread settling over him as the sound intensified and he recognised them as B-17's. Klaus stirred next to him, his body tensing as he too recognised the incoming danger.

"Bombs," Klaus muttered under his breath, throwing back the covers as he sprang out of bed. The urgency in his voice was palpable, and he quickly moved to the window, peering out into the darkness.

The engines were deafening now, and before either could react further, the first explosion ripped through the night. The house shook violently, a terrifying indication of the bomb's proximity. Glass shattered, sending shards flying as the windows blew in, and the room was suddenly filled with dust and debris.

"We need to move, now!" Klaus shouted over the chaos, grabbing Bucky's arm and pulling him towards the door. They stumbled through the disarray, dodging fallen furniture and the remnants of the walls that had started to crumble under the force of the blast.

The corridor outside their room was a scene of destruction. Plaster and broken beams littered the floor, and the air was thick with dust, making it hard to see and breathe. They coughed as they made their way through the wreckage, each step causing them to stumble over the unstable debris.

Another explosion, closer this time, shook the foundations of the

house. The floor beneath them trembled, and a loud cracking sound echoed through the building.

The night descended into chaos as the sound of sirens mingled with the roar of engines overhead. Bucky, wide-eyed with fear, clutched Klaus's hand tightly as they dashed through the darkened corridors of the house, seeking the relative safety of the reinforced cellar. The house trembled under the onslaught of the bombs, each blast a brutal echo in his ears.

As they navigated through the mess, the earth-shattering sound of an explosion nearby shook the very foundation of the house. The shockwave from the blast hit with an unforgiving force, tearing Bucky's hand from Klaus's grasp. Bucky was thrown against the wall, his body slamming into the hard surface with a painful thud before landing in the rubble.

Disoriented, his ears ringing so loudly that they drowned out the sounds around him, Bucky struggled to regain his senses. His vision blurred, and for a moment, all he could hear was the high-pitched whine in his ears. Panic set in as he realised he was separated from Klaus, the only person who had become his anchor in this existence.

Klaus, realising that Bucky was no longer by his side, turned back frantically. "Schatz!" he screamed, his voice filled with panic and fear, cutting through the noise of continuing explosions. The smoke and dust from the collapsed walls filled the air, making it difficult to see, but Klaus pushed through, his desperation to find his boy lending strength to his movements.

Bucky, coughing from the dust, reached out blindly, his hands grasping at the debris around him, searching for anything familiar in the terrifying darkness. His heart pounded in his chest, fear mingling with the urge to find Klaus. He was fucking terrified, he'd never been on the other end of the bombs before, but he knew exactly what happens when you are.

Another bomb hit close by, the blast sending vibrations through the ground, and Bucky flinched, curling into himself. He could hear Klaus calling for him, each shout more frantic than the last. "Flower! Where are you?"

Summoning what strength he had left, Bucky managed to shout back, his voice hoarse, "Here! Klaus, I'm here!"

Klaus's figure soon appeared through the haze of dust, his face etched

with fear and relief as he spotted his boy. He rushed to him, pulling him into his arms, his hold both protective and trembling. "Are you hurt?" Klaus asked urgently, his hands roaming over Bucky, to check for injuries.

"I—I don't think so," Bucky managed to reply, his voice shaky. The proximity to Klaus and the sense of safety he provided were exactly what he needed right now. He didn't want to be alone during this.

They didn't have time to assess further as another series of explosions rocked the nearby town. The sound was deafening, a relentless assault that spurred them into motion once more. Klaus helped Bucky to his feet, supporting him as they continued their desperate dash towards the cellar.

They continued towards the cellar, with each step uncertain and perilous as the house continued to bear the brunt of the air assault. As they finally reached the safety of the cellar, closing the heavy door behind them, the echo of the bombings muffled by the thick walls, they both slumped against it, gasping for breath.

The close encounter with the explosion shook Bucky both physically and emotionally. The tears started as a quiet trickle, silent and unnoticed, but as the reality of their narrow escape and the constant threat of danger pressed down on him, his chest started to heave, and then he winced in pain, his hand coming to his side.

As they sat in the weak light of the cellar, Klaus noticed a dark patch spreading on Bucky's shirt. His expression shifted from concern to alarm as he gently manoeuvred Bucky to inspect the source of the bleeding.

"Let me see," Klaus insisted, his voice steady despite the rising worry. Bucky's movements were hesitant, pain flaring as he shifted to give Klaus better access to his side, where the fabric of his shirt was slowly staining with blood.

Klaus carefully lifted the shirt, revealing a deep gash along his boy's ribcage, likely from flying debris or his harsh contact with the wall during the blast. The sight of the wound made Klaus's jaw tighten, his hands becoming more deliberate as he assessed the severity.

"It’s not good, but it could have been much worse," Klaus murmured mostly to himself as he pressed a clean cloth against the wound to stem the bleeding. "You’re going to be okay, Flower. I need you to hold this tight against it."

Bucky nodded, his hand trembling as he took over, holding the makeshift bandage. The pain was sharp, a stark contrast to the numbing fear that had overwhelmed him during their frantic escape. Klaus rummaged through a small medical kit he kept in the cellar for emergencies, quickly pulling out antiseptic and bandages.

As Klaus cleaned the wound, his touch was surprisingly gentle, but his face was hardening as he worked, and the tension in the cellar was escalating as Klaus's anger surged. His face, usually composed, was now twisted into an expression of frustration and annoyance.

Standing up after securing the bandage around his boy's stomach, he paced the small confines of their shelter, his steps heavy and agitated.

"This is exactly what I try to prevent, Bucky!" Klaus snapped, his voice echoing off the cold concrete walls. He turned sharply on his heel to face Bucky, his eyes burning with fierce intensity. "You getting hurt complicates everything. How many times do I have to tell you to be more careful?"

Bucky recoiled slightly, the sharpness in Klaus’s tone cutting deeper than the shrapnel that had grazed his skin. He tried to speak, to explain, but Klaus cut him off.

"No, I don't want to hear your excuses," Klaus continued, his hands clenching into fists at his sides. "Every time you're hurt, it's a liability. Do you understand? A liability that I can't afford. That we can't afford."

The harsh words stung, and Bucky felt a mix of hurt and confusion swirl inside him. He struggled to reconcile the caring man he sometimes saw in Klaus with the angry figure before him now. "Klaus, I—"

"Do you think I need this right now?" Klaus interrupted again, his voice rising in anger. "Do you think I have the time to deal with this? We're in the middle of a war, Flower! Your carelessness could have killed us both!"

Bucky’s voice was small, almost lost in the turmoil. "I'm trying, Klaus. I didn’t mean for any of this to happen. I didn't mean to slow you down. I was trying."

Klaus scoffed, his expression darkening. "Trying? This is what your trying gets us? You need to do better than try. You need to actually keep yourself safe!" He stepped closer, his presence looming over

Bucky. "Or maybe you're just too selfish to see beyond your own pain, too caught up in your own feelings to consider the consequences of your actions."

The accusation was a blow, leaving Bucky feeling as though the ground had shifted beneath him. Klaus's words twisted the knife of guilt and self-doubt deeper. "I'm not being selfish," Bucky protested weakly, his voice breaking. "I don't want any of this—"

"But here we are, Bucky," Klaus interrupted sharply, his tone biting. "Because you couldn't be careful enough. Because you couldn't listen. Everything I do is to protect us, and you still manage to find a way to make it harder."

The gaslighting left Bucky disoriented and questioning his own perceptions. Was he really at fault here? He didn't know that they were going to be bombed. His thoughts tangled as he tried to sort through the emotional toxins Klaus's words had left in their wake.

Klaus sighed heavily, as if burdened by an immense, invisible weight. He ran a hand through his hair, his anger seeming to simmer just below the surface. "Look, I don't want to fight," he said, his voice suddenly softer and more controlled. "I know you're hurt, and that wasn't my intention. But you have to understand that I'm under a lot of pressure. We both are."

Klaus stopped pacing, his expression softening slightly as he registered Bucky's withdrawal. He let out a long sigh, pinching the bridge of his nose as he composed himself. "I know you didn't mean to," he said more gently, kneeling in front of Bucky to be at eye level with him. "It's just... every time you're hurt, I'm reminded of how easily I could lose you."

The shift in Klaus's tone, from anger to vulnerability, took Bucky by surprise. He looked up, meeting Klaus's eyes and seeing the genuine fear hidden beneath the initial anger. It was a reminder of the complex layers of their relationship. Klaus only wanted what was best for him.

Bucky nodded, the fight draining out of him. He felt exhausted and emotionally spent from the volley of accusations and the swift turn to conciliatory tones. "I know, Klaus. I'm sorry. I'll try to be more careful," he murmured.

Klaus nodded, seemingly appeased. "Good. That's all I ask." He reached out, pulling Bucky into a hug that felt both comforting and

confining. "I'm doing all this for us," he murmured into Bucky's hair. "You know that, right?"

"Yes," Bucky whispered back, his voice hollow. He rested his head against Klaus's chest, the heartbeat beneath his ear a steady reminder of living through the close call they'd both had. As they leant into each other's embrace, Bucky's thoughts lingered on the thin line between protection and possession, a line that seemed to blur more with each passing day.

He stepped back from Bucky, his eyes scanning the dimly lit space as if ensuring their safety, before he continued. The subtle change in his posture was like the calm before a storm. Klaus's gaze returned to Bucky, intense and dark. "We're moving at dawn," he declared, his voice low and resolute. "To a place far from all this chaos—a place where no one will find us, where you'll be truly safe."

The declaration hung heavy in the air, carrying with it an ominous promise. Klaus's hand reached out, his fingers gripping Bucky's chin with a possessive force that left no room for protest. His thumb caressed Bucky's jawline as he scrutinised his face, a gesture that bordered on tender but felt more like a claim being staked.

"You don't understand what it would do to me if I lost you, my little flower," Klaus continued, his tone dipping into something darker and more obsessive. "You are mine, and I can't... I won't allow anything in this world to change that."

The intensity in Klaus's eyes flickered with a kind of madness, the depths of his attachment laid bare in the dim cellar light. "If anyone tries to take you from me, they'll regret it. I'll burn down everything and leave nothing but ash before I let that happen."

Klaus's grip tightened, not enough to hurt but enough to emphasise his point. His other hand came up to cradle Bucky's face, holding him as if he were something precious, something irreplaceable and fragile. "This new place, it's fortified and secluded. No one will touch you there. No one can reach you. You'll be untouchable, Schatz."

He leant in closer, his breath warm against Bucky's cheek. "I need you to understand, this is for us. This is so we can be together without interference or threats. It's the only way we can be free," he whispered, each word laced with a fervour that bordered on frenzied desperation.

Pulling back slightly, Klaus searched Bucky's face for any sign of

acceptance, any trace of the agreement he so desperately sought. “Say you understand, Bucky. Tell me you know I’m doing this because I love you,” he urged, his voice a blend of command and plea.

Bucky felt the weight of Klaus’s gaze, the oppressive atmosphere of the cellar, and the unsettling warmth of Klaus’s hands on his skin.

“I understand, Klaus,” Bucky murmured, his voice barely above a whisper. It was a submission, a nod to the inevitable, driven by the weariness of constant fear and the confusing mix of safety and captivity Klaus offered.

Klaus’s expression softened, a smile touching his lips as he pulled Bucky into his arms. “You’ll see, it will all be better soon,” he promised, his voice soothing as he stroked Bucky’s hair. “Just trust me.”

As Klaus held him, Bucky allowed himself a moment of respite in the embrace, his mind and body still in a tumult of emotions and pain from his side. There was comfort here, in the familiarity of Klaus’s presence, but it was a comfort lined with thorns—a reminder that his safety was tethered to Klaus’s whims, his life a thing to be controlled.

The morning air was sharp and biting as Klaus ushered Bucky into the front of an old military truck. The vehicle, nondescript and battered by use, was similar to any other that might have trundled through the war-ravaged roads of Germany. Klaus climbed in after Bucky, the metal door slamming shut with a resonant thud that echoed slightly in the hollow space.

As the truck started with a rumble, jostling them slightly along the road, Bucky glanced nervously out of the window. The landscape rolled by, a blur of destruction and movement. Towns that had once perhaps been vibrant and lively now lay in partial ruin, their buildings gutted by the relentless bombings last night.

The streets were filled with people, their faces etched with the lines of hardship and sadness. Families, clutching meagre possessions or pulling small, overloaded carts, moved like ghosts among the ruins. Here and there, the uniforms of German soldiers stood out sharply against the drab surroundings, their presence a harsh reminder of the ongoing conflict that had consumed the country.

Bucky’s heart clenched at the sight of them and the bodies of people

littering the ruins, and a wave of vulnerability washed over him. Instinctively, he shifted closer to Klaus, seeking a sense of security in his proximity. Klaus noticed the movement and placed an arm around Bucky's shoulders, drawing him in close. The gesture was protective, and Bucky found himself leaning into the warmth it offered, despite the complexity of his feelings towards the man beside him.

They drove in silence for a while, the only sounds were the steady hum of the truck's engine and the occasional muffled noise from outside. Bucky watched the landscape change as they moved away from the busy towns to more secluded areas, the destruction giving way to patches of unmarred nature that hadn't been hit by their bombs.

After what felt like hours, the truck slowed, turning up a long, tree-lined driveway that led to a large house. The building stood proudly against the sky, its grand facade showing signs of wear, and the grounds around it were meticulously kept despite the chaos of the times. The truck came to a stop, and Klaus was the first to climb out, offering his hand to help Bucky down.

The gesture, so normal yet so incongruent with their circumstances, caused a ripple of confusion to pass through Bucky. He took Klaus's hand, feeling the firm grip that pulled him gently to the ground. As they walked towards the imposing doors of the house, Bucky glanced up at Klaus, trying to read his expression. Klaus looked back at him, a smile playing at the corners of his mouth, reassuring yet unreadable.

"Welcome to our new home, Bucky," Klaus announced as he opened the door, gesturing for Bucky to enter first. The interior of the house was surprisingly warm and inviting, with rich tapestries and polished wood that spoke of a time before the war had touched everything with its poison.

Klaus led Bucky through the hallways, his hand resting lightly on Bucky's back over his mark, guiding him with an ease that suggested familiarity and possession. They passed through several large rooms, each decorated with an eye for comfort and luxury until they reached what looked to be a large seating area.

"Here, you can rest," Klaus said, motioning to a plush armchair near the fireplace. "I have business to attend to, but we'll talk more later. Make yourself comfortable, Schatz. Consider this your sanctuary. I have some work to attend to in my office. It would appear one of my dogs has managed to get free," he said cryptically. Bucky just nodded,

not bothering or caring enough to ask why a dog was so important to a man like Klaus.

As Klaus left the room, Bucky sat down in the chair, feeling the softness of the cushion envelop him. He looked around, taking in the rich details of the room—bookshelves laden with volumes untouched by war, walls adorned with serene landscapes and noble portraits. It was all so far removed from the cold stone confines of their previous accommodations, yet the luxuries here did little to ease the knot of unease in his stomach.

He was in a golden cage, perhaps, but a cage nonetheless. As he gazed into the flickering flames of the fireplace, Bucky realised that no amount of luxury could erase the truth of his situation or the complex web of emotions he felt towards the man who now held his life in his hands. The warmth of the fire was a small comfort, but the chill of his reality was ever-present, lurking just beneath the surface of the grandeur that surrounded him.

Becoming restless, Bucky stood up and glanced around the room before walking towards the door. He moved through the hallways with hesitant steps, wary but curious. The silence of the large house was punctuated only by the soft creak of wooden floors under his weight, each step seeming to echo in the vast emptiness of the large house.

Each door he encountered along the way leading outside, Bucky tested, his hands turning handles that refused to yield for him. Locked, each one of them. Sealing off the world outside just as effectively as they caged him within. A deep sense of isolation crept over him, and the realisation that every exit was locked tightened the knot of anxiety in his stomach. Guess Klaus still didn't trust him fully enough to not run. Yet he continued, driven by a need to familiarise himself with the latest place Klaus had placed him.

Eventually, his exploration brought him to a room unlike the others. It was smaller and more intimate, and at its centre stood a grand piano, its surface cloaked in a fine layer of dust. The sight of it halted Bucky in his tracks, a pang of bittersweet nostalgia ripping through him. He approached it slowly. Something he hadn't felt in months, putting a little pep in his steps as he ran his fingers through the dust on the lid, watching the particles swirl in the air, caught briefly in a shaft of light from the window.

Lifting the heavy lid, Bucky allowed his fingers to hover over the keys

for a moment before pressing down gently, the sound echoing slightly in the quiet room. The keys felt familiar under his touch, a comforting reminder of a different life. He settled onto the bench, a deep sigh escaping him as he poised his fingers to play.

The opening notes of "We'll Meet Again" by Dame Vera Lynn filled the room, each chord filled with a yearning that mirrored his own. The song had been a favourite of theirs, one that Buck used to hum during quiet moments, its melody a whisper of hope.

"We'll meet again," Bucky sang softly, his voice barely above a whisper, as if afraid of breaking the spell the music cast. "Don't know where, don't know when, but I know we'll meet again some sunny day."

His thoughts drifted to Buck. The memory of his smile, the sound of his laughter. They seemed like echoes from another world, one that Bucky feared was slipping further and further away with each passing day.

"Keep smiling through, just like you always do, 'til the blue skies drive the dark clouds far away." His voice cracked with emotion. The lyrics were a plea for both Buck and himself. They were more than just words— they were a lifeline to a hope that felt increasingly frail.

Bucky paused, his fingers resting on the keys, his head bowed. The weight of his current reality pressed down on him, from the melody on the opposite side of a coin to the silent, suffocating atmosphere of the large, locked house.

"So will you please say hello to the folks that I know, tell them I won't be long," he continued, his voice strengthening as he lost himself in the music. Each note was a prayer to Buck, a silent message sent through the chords that maybe, just maybe, could reach him.

"They'll be happy to know that as you saw me go, I was singing this song." A tear trailed down Bucky’s cheek, the emotional strain of the song pulling at the fragile seams of his composure. The room seemed to close in around him, and the walls were witnesses to his pain and isolation.

As the song neared its end, Bucky played the final notes with a tender, lingering touch. The silence that followed felt heavy, loaded with unspoken words and stifled emotions. He sat there for a long moment, his fingers resting on the keys, the echoes of the melody hanging in the air like a promise.

"We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when," he whispered to the empty room, to himself, and to Buck, wherever he might be. "But I know we'll meet again some sunny day."

Bucky sat at the piano with his eyes closed, his fingers hovering over the keys, hesitant. The silence was profound, almost sacred, as if the room itself were holding its breath, waiting for the music to fill the emptiness.

With a deep, almost imperceptible sigh, Bucky pressed down on the keys, the first chords of "When I Grow Too Old to Dream" echoing in the quiet space. The melody was slow and deliberate, each note a thread in the tapestry of memories he wove with his music.

As he played, Bucky's voice joined the melody, soft and trembling.

"When I grow too old to dream,
I'll have you to remember.
When I grow too old to dream,
Your love will live in my heart."

The words, simple yet profound, stirred something deep within him. His voice grew in strength, filling the room with the haunting beauty of his heartache. The song was a tribute to the life he had once envisioned with Buck, a life full of dreams and aspirations that now seemed as distant as the stars above.

"So kiss me, my sweet,
And so let us part.
And when I grow too old to dream,
That kiss will live in my heart."

As he reached the song's middle, Bucky's voice cracked, the weight of his emotions too heavy to bear. The piano faltered, the melody stumbling as tears blurred his vision. The words became too strong of a reminder of all that he had lost—the kiss that would live in his heart, a bittersweet echo of a love that was supposed to last a lifetime.

Overcome, Bucky leant forward, resting his forehead against the cool wood of the piano. His body shook as he sobbed, the grief pouring out of him in waves. The room, filled with the ghostly remnants of his song, seemed to mourn with him, the walls echoing his heartbreak.

"Why can't I just forget?" he whispered into the silence, his voice hoarse with emotion. "Why does it have to hurt so much?" The questions were more an expression of pain than a search for answers.

He knew there was no forgetting, no relief from the ache that permeated his very being.

The song had opened a floodgate, and memories of his life with Buck surged forward—moments of laughter and love, stolen kisses, and shared dreams. Each memory was a sharp stab of joy and pain, intermingled so closely that Bucky could hardly breathe through the tightness in his chest.

He remembered Buck's smile, the way his eyes lit up when he laughed, and the warmth of his touch. These memories were treasures, jewels of a happier time that Bucky clung to desperately, even as they slipped through his fingers like grains of sand.

Bucky’s heart throbbed painfully in his chest as his thoughts fixated on Buck. He imagined what Buck must think of him now—tarnished, diminished, a shadow of the man he once loved. Klaus's venomous words, suggesting that Buck saw him as disgusting and unworthy of his love, gnawed at his mind.

The very idea that Buck could find him repulsive now was a torment all its own. It twisted in his gut. The notion that the man who had loved him so passionately could now recoil at the mere thought of his touch was unbearable. It eroded the foundations of his identity, leaving him feeling hollow and unworthy.

"Why does every thought of him have to hurt?" Bucky murmured into the empty room, his voice a raw whisper that barely stirred the air. The pain was a constant companion, an unbearable force that sapped his will and coloured every moment of his existence.

Tears streamed down his cheeks, unchecked, as he allowed himself to fully feel the depth of the love that he had lost. Resigned, he whispered to the room, to himself, or perhaps to the memory of Buck, "I'll always love you, no matter what I've become. No matter if you can’t love me back."

With trembling hands, Bucky closed the lid of the piano gently, as if tucking away the memories along with the keys. He stood, his legs unsteady, and took a deep breath, trying to compose himself. The song had brought him to the brink, but it had also reminded him of the strength of the love he and Buck shared—a love not even time or circumstance could erase.

Bucky stepped away from the piano, leaving the room behind. The echoes of the song lingered in the air like a promise. A promise that,

despite the pain, the love they shared was a beacon that would guide him through the darkest times.

As he walked through the quiet halls of the large house, Bucky carried with him the melody of the song, a silent hymn to a love that would live forever in his heart, no matter how old he grew, no matter how much he had to dream.

Chapter 21: Key to Secrets

Bucky's restlessness intensified as he struggled to get back to sleep after jolting awake from a bad dream. A sense of loneliness enveloped him in the quiet of the room. Each soft snore from Klaus only deepened the solitude of his thoughts, which fluttered around the corners of the room like trapped moths.

The gentle sway of the curtains drew his gaze, their movement a ghostly dance in the moonlit room. It was as if the world outside was breathing in deep, slow breaths, trying to lull him back to sleep. But sleep seemed like a distant memory, a luxury afforded to those whose minds weren't constant enemies against themselves.

Pulling himself up slightly, Bucky propped his head on one elbow, allowing himself a clearer view of Klaus. The moonlight draped over Klaus's face, highlighting the creases born of frowns and the war, now smoothed into a quiet and peaceful repose. Seeing him this way, vulnerable and unaware, Bucky felt an unexpected surge of protection wash over him, mingled with a residual fear of the man that never fully dissipated as he considered the duality of the man beside him—by day a tyrant, by night, seemingly just a man like any other.

He wondered, not for the first time, what dreams filled Klaus's sleep. Were they haunted by the same shadows that chased Bucky through his own restless nights? Or did he dream of power and control, realms where his will was law, unchallenged and absolute?

A gust of wind outside caught the curtains, and they fluttered more aggressively, casting shifting shadows across the room. The movement startled Bucky. He felt trapped, not just in this room or in this house, but within a life that no longer felt like his own. Each day blended into the next, each decision made with a glance over his shoulder, each night spent listening to the breathing of the man who owned him in more ways than he could count.

Finally, unable to bear the stillness any longer, Bucky slipped from under the sheets, his movements careful and quiet. He needed to move to feel something other than the soft sheets and the warmth of the body next to him. The cool air of the room brushed against his skin as he stood, an icy contrast to the lingering warmth of the bed. He walked to the window and pulled the curtains aside, peering out into the night.

As his eyes adjusted to the darkness outside, the outlines of the garden below took shape. The trees swayed gently in the breeze, their branches etching intricate patterns against the sky. It was a scene of peaceful chaos, a natural order that seemed so alien to the ordered chaos in which he found himself.

Leaning forward, Bucky pressed his forehead against the cool glass, his breath misting up the surface. Outside, the serene and peaceful quiet felt distant and almost unreal compared to the chaos that now dominated his life. He felt more disconnected from the world than ever before.

It brought back the conversation he had with Buck back at Thorpe Abbotts so long ago, in the bar—about being forgotten, about the world moving on without him. Here, in this quiet moment, staring out into the night, his fears seemed to have manifested. The world didn't seem to need him, and it certainly didn't look like it would remember him.

Compelled by a need to move and do something to shake off his thoughts, he moved quietly, picking up the scattered clothes from the floor—the carelessly thrown remains of their earlier activities. As he gathered Klaus's pants, a small, metallic object slipped from one of the pockets and clattered softly against the wooden floor.

Bucky paused, his heart skipping a beat at the sound. He bent down, his fingers closing around the cold metal. It was a key, heavy and ornate—the key to Klaus's office. He turned it over in his hand, the metal catching the moonlight and gleaming.

His gaze shifted to Klaus, who remained undisturbed, his breathing deep and even. Then, slowly, Bucky's eyes moved to the door, slightly ajar, a sliver of light from the hallway. It was a moment of decision, the weight of the cold metal in his hand anchoring him to the possibilities of what lay beyond their shared space, holding answers to what was going on outside his carefully crafted and monitored cage.

With a breath that felt like the first true breath of the night, Bucky made up his mind. He slipped from the room, the key tight in his grip, a silent figure moving through the shadows towards the answers that awaited him in the quiet of Klaus's office.

Bucky's heart thumped loudly in his chest as he tiptoed down the darkened hallway, the key clutched tightly in his hand. Every creak of the old wooden floorboards under his feet sounded like thunder in the

silence of the night. His mind raced, each step taking him further from the safety of the known into the precarious unknown.

Reaching Klaus's office, Bucky paused at the door, his breath shallow. The wood felt cold and imposing under his touch, the intricate patterns of the grain etched deep and dark by the moonlight spilling through a nearby window. His hand trembled slightly as he inserted the key into the lock, the metallic click of the tumblers falling into place seeming unnaturally loud in the stillness.

He pushed the door open slowly, wincing at the soft groan of the hinges. The room smelled of leather, old books, and a scent that was so distinctively Klaus. This was, of course, the heart of Klaus's domain. Bucky stepped inside, his eyes adjusting to the darkness and the shapes of the furniture.

He moved to the desk, a large, imposing piece that dominated the room, and flicked on the lamp. Papers were stacked neatly, each pile an obvious nod to Klaus's meticulous nature and order. Bucky's fingers hovered over them, hesitant. This was Klaus's sanctum, a place no one entered without his express permission, and here Bucky was, about to sift through his most private correspondences.

His hands trembled slightly as they brushed over the surface of the desk, moving papers with deliberate care to avoid disturbing the precise order Klaus kept and making it obvious that he'd been in here, snooping.

The documents were mostly mundane at first glance—logistics, supply requests, and coded messages that spoke of Klaus's far-reaching influence in the war. But then, under a stack of maps detailing troop movements, Bucky's hand paused on a folder thinner than the rest, marked only with a date and a stamp of urgency on it.

With a cautious glance towards the door, he unfolded the folder. Inside, he found a series of correspondence reports detailing troop movements, espionage activities, and then a list of recent escapees from organised marches.

His breath hitched as his eyes scanned down the list—there, in stark black ink, were the names: Brady, Demarco, Crank, and the name he knew better than his own. One that was etched into his heart—Gale Winston Cleven. Buck. His Buck.

His fingers brushed over the cold, precise lettering on the report—the names of those who had escaped, including Buck. The shock of seeing

Buck's name was like a lightning strike in the murky fog of his existence, illuminating but also terrifying.

A wave of relief so profound that it bordered on agony washed over him. For a moment, elation surged through him, pure and bright. Buck was out there, alive and free. But almost as quickly as the joy arose, it was chased by a crushing wave of doubt and fear. Bucky's heart thudded painfully in his chest.

Did Buck even want to find him now? Was Buck looking for him? Had Buck written him off as another casualty of the brutal war? Perhaps he had moved on, accepting Bucky's likely death amidst the chaos because it was easier.

Bucky was so changed, so marred by what he had endured—far from the man Buck had fallen in love with. He felt tainted and damaged, starkly contrasting the clean, honourable life they had once dreamed of together. And Buck had made it clear to Klaus that he was disgusted by Bucky now.

Bucky's eyes blurred with unshed tears as he pondered his worthiness. The Bucky that Buck had loved—the vibrant, brave, untarnished soul—seemed like a spectre from another life, one that had not been warped by hardship and betrayal. He felt marked and irrevocably changed by the experiences that had been forced upon him. "Would Buck even recognise me now?" he thought despairingly.

He clutched the report a little tighter, the paper crinkling under his fingers. "Maybe it's better if he believes I didn't make it." Bucky's thoughts darkened with the notion. "At least then he could remember me as I was, not as... whatever I am now." This thought, however morose, was a defence mechanism, shielding his fragile heart from further rejection and pain.

As these thoughts swirled chaotically in his mind, a profound loneliness enveloped him, deepening with each passing second as he stared at the black ink on the crisp white paper. Three words—a name—had just thrown Bucky's small bubble of life into a chaotic downward spiral.

Doubt clawed at him, whispering that he was now less than the man Buck had loved—damaged and tainted by his prolonged exposure to Klaus.

Bucky's hands shook as he carefully replaced the papers, making sure everything was as he had found it. Each movement was robotic, a

mask of calm over a maelstrom of emotion.

He needed to think, but first, he had to return to Klaus before he woke up and came looking for Bucky. But a small part of him also craved his attention. He needed to be close to the one constant in his new life. He wanted Klaus to hold him and tell him everything was okay. He just needed something right now—anything. To stop the burning sensation behind his eyes and the tightening vice in his chest.

Switching off the light and plunging the room back into darkness, he slipped out of Klaus's office, locking the door quietly behind him. The key felt burning hot in his hand, a symbol of the dangerous step he'd taken tonight. Bucky made his way back to the bedroom, his steps more hurried now, fueled by a mix of fear and urgency.

After Bucky carefully replaced the key in Klaus's pants, ensuring everything was as undisturbed as possible, he felt a compulsion to step outside and get some fresh air.

He moved quietly through the darkened bedroom to the balcony doors. Surprisingly, they were unlocked, giving him a rare and unguarded passage to the outside world. The cool night air brushed against his face as he stepped out, the vast, starlit sky momentarily taking his breath away.

The balcony overlooked the expansive estate grounds, three stories high, with a view that stretched into the shadowy outlines of the garden and beyond.

Bucky approached the ledge and carefully climbed up. His heart pounded in his chest as he peered down, the ground seeming impossibly far yet fatally close at the same time.

The idea of jumping, of just leaning forward and letting go, flickered through his mind like a dark whisper. It would be so easy—a swift end to the constant turmoil and fear that gnawed at him day and night. He could end the pain, the manipulation, and the endless cycle of control and dependency. He could end it all right now. He wouldn't have to feel this way anymore, torn between a past that seemed increasingly like a distant dream and a present that felt like a suffocating nightmare.

But then another thought surfaced, stronger and more insistent. Buck. What would Buck think if he knew Bucky had given up and had chosen to end it all this way? Buck, who had fought so hard and was probably still fighting, would be devastated, right? He had known

Bucky as a fighter, a survivor—not someone who surrendered. The disappointment and the sense of betrayal Buck might feel haunted Bucky more than the thought of continuing to endure anything the world has to throw at him.

The isolation wasn't just physical. It was a deep, soulful ache for the man who had once been his compass, his confidante, and his love. "Buck, if you're out there, if you're still fighting, don't fight for me. I'm not the man you loved anymore," he silently pleaded, a silent whisper to a star he wasn't sure would ever hear him again.

With a heavy sigh, Bucky leant forward slightly, letting one foot hover over the edge, his hair rustling in the breeze. The adrenaline surged through him, a bitter taste in his mouth, a heart-stopping moment of what could be. The pain, the fear, the loss—it could all end with a simple lean into the void. No more hiding, no more fighting, no more fear of what each new day under Klaus's gaze might bring. It was a seductive thought, darkly appealing in its simplicity.

But then, with a shaky breath, he pulled back. He wasn’t ready to let go—not yet. Not while there was still a chance Buck might be looking for him. Might need him to be strong and to be alive.

Retreating from the ledge, Bucky sat down on the cold surface of the balcony, his legs dangling over the edge. He stared up at the stars, each one a sparkle of light in the vast darkness, and allowed himself to imagine that somewhere, under the same stretch of sky, Buck was looking up too, thinking of him. The connection to Buck, tenuous and fragile, was enough to pull him back from the brink.

He stayed there for a long time, until the chill of the night seeped into his bones and the overwhelming whirlwind of his emotions began to ebb. Eventually, with a deep, steadying breath, he climbed off the edge and went back inside, closing the balcony doors behind him with a soft click. The noise mimicked the finality of his decision not to jump. He moved quietly across the room, the carpet muffling his footsteps as he approached the bed where Klaus lay sleeping, unaffected by the emotional storm raging through Bucky.

Climbing back into the bed, the sheets cool against his skin, Bucky lay on his back, staring at the ceiling. The shadows there danced with the rhythm of the outside breeze, and for a moment, he allowed himself to watch them, a brief distraction from his thoughts. But peace was elusive, and his gaze inevitably shifted to Klaus, whose face was relaxed in sleep, so starkly different from the insidious intensity that

marked his waking moments most of the time.

The sight of Klaus, so peaceful and unguarded, brought a complex mix of emotions to the surface. Bucky felt a confusing blend of resentment, longing, and an undeniable dependence on the man who had become both his keeper and his closest companion in captivity. His mind raced with thoughts of Buck, freedom, and the maddening impossibility of his situation. He felt adrift, unmoored from any sense of normalcy or safety. It was making him feel sick and lightheaded.

As his heart ached for a sign that Buck was still out there, still fighting for him, Bucky's need for comfort grew unbearable. Turning towards Klaus, he reached out tentatively and shook him gently. "Klaus," he whispered, his voice carrying in the small space between them.

Klaus stirred, blinking his eyes open, confusion giving way to alertness as he took in Bucky's distraught expression. "What's wrong?" he murmured, his voice low and husky with sleep but tinged with concern.

Bucky's throat tightened, and the words were difficult to form. "Can you—can you just hold me?" he asked, the vulnerability in his voice raw and exposed.

For a moment, Klaus studied him, his eyes searching Bucky's face as if trying to read him. Then, with a slight nod, he opened his arms. Bucky didn't hesitate, moving closer and fitting himself against Klaus's body.

Klaus's arms wrapped around him, strong and enveloping, pulling him flush against his chest. Bucky felt a wave of relief as he was drawn into the protective circle of Klaus's embrace.

Klaus tucked his chin over Bucky's shoulder, his breath warm against Bucky's neck, offering a sense of security. As Bucky nestled closer, the steady beat of Klaus's heart against his ear provided a momentary distraction from his spiralling thoughts.

In Klaus's arms, the turmoil inside Bucky didn't cease entirely, but it became more bearable. The physical closeness brought a semblance of peace, a reminder that he wasn't completely alone, even if the source of his comfort was also the source of much of his pain.

As they lay there, Bucky allowed himself to relax slightly, the tension draining from his body as he succumbed to the complicated comfort Klaus provided. His eyes finally closed, not in sleep but in a resigned acceptance of the moment's respite from all of it.

Under the vast expanse of the night sky, Buck paused in his tracks, his gaze lifting to the myriad of stars twinkling above him. The darkness of the night draped around him like a cloak, soaking everything in shadows.

He remembered nights spent with Bucky, lying on their backs in open fields far away from everyone, pointing out constellations and making wishes on shooting stars. Those memories, so vivid in Buck's mind, quieted the harsh reality of his current solitude and situation.

Buck drew a deep breath of the chilly night air, his breath forming a misty cloud as he exhaled. He could almost hear Bucky's voice, soft and full of wonder, as they shared stories and dreams under a similar starlit canvas. "You see that cluster over there?" Bucky would say, his finger tracing an invisible line from one star to another. "That's us, Buck. Always together, no matter how far apart we seem."

The thought brought a melancholy smile to Buck's face, and a pang of longing tightened in his chest. He wondered if Bucky was looking up at the same stars right now, if he felt the same aching distance and the same fervent hope that somehow the space between them wasn't insurmountable.

"Wherever you are, Bucky," Buck murmured, his voice barely a whisper against the whisper of the wind. "I hope you're under these same stars. And I hope they're guiding me right back to you."

Clutching the dog tags hanging around his neck—a constant, cold reminder of both his identity and his purpose—Buck felt a renewed determination stir within him. These stars. This night's sky. They weren't just markers of time or navigation points. They were reminders of his promise, silent witnesses to the unspoken oath he carried in his heart. To return to Bucky, to find him and hold him so damn tight, and to never let him go again. It was an oath, a devotion, and a love that could never be quelled.

Buck sighed, a sound lost to the whispering wind. He knew the odds were against him. Every day spent apart was another day that threatened to widen the chasm between them, another day for Bucky to possibly forget the promises they had made.

With a final glance at the starry expanse, Buck shifted his pack on his shoulders and continued his journey back to his men hidden in the trees, each step a step closer to the reunion that he yearned for with

every fibre of his being.

The stars, distant yet comforting, seemed to nod in silent approval, their ancient light a guiding beacon in the darkness. A guide back to Bucky.

Chapter 22: Broken Sanctuaries

Chapter Notes

Hope you guys enjoy!

It had been nearly two weeks since Bucky had been moved to Klaus's estate. Each day seemed longer than the last, a monotonous blend of silence and boredom. There was only so much one could do inside the house, and the feeling of being caged was making his skin crawl. The knowledge that Buck was out there, somewhere, had been burning in the back of his mind for four days now, fueling a restlessness in him that was becoming unbearable.

In an attempt to distract himself from the gnawing anxiety and the creeping walls, Bucky had taken to pacing the length of the large living room. His feet traced the intricate patterns of the rug, back and forth, as he ran through baseball plays in his head. With each step, he swung an imaginary bat, striking at phantom pitches and sliding into make-believe bases.

His steps traced the intricate patterns of the rug, back and forth, as he muttered baseball plays under his breath. "Bottom of the ninth, bases loaded," he whispered to himself, swinging an imaginary bat and striking at phantom pitches. "Egan's up at bat. The crowd's going wild. And there's the pitch—swing and a long drive into left field!" His voice echoed in the empty room as he threw his head back and roared, mimicking the crowd.

The mental simulation of the game brought him a fleeting sense of freedom, a reminder of open fields and the crack of a real bat—a stark contrast to his confinement in the house. He slid into imaginary bases, dusting off his hands on his pants, a ghost of a smile flickering across his face.

"Two outs, you can do this. You just need a good hit," he continued, his voice growing more fervent and his movements more animated. He was lost in the game, a temporary escape from his current reality. He pitched the ball, swung the bat, and ran the bases, over and over, a loop that tethered him to a semblance of sanity.

But as the game wore on, the walls of the room seemed to close in further, the shadows stretching longer across the floor and the corners darker. The echoes of his solitary game began to sound hollow, and a

laugh—a bitter, hollow sound—escaped him. "You're pitching to yourself now, Bucky. Ain't no game here, just a man losing his damn mind."

Exhausted, he stopped in the middle of the room, his chest heaving from the exertion. His gaze drifted to the door that led outside. The need for real air, for the touch of the wind, was overwhelming. He walked over to it, each step heavy. He reached for the knob, turning it with a shaky hand, but the door remained firmly shut.

Locked in. Always fucking locked in.

It was like a physical blow. In frustration and a flash of rage, Bucky kicked at the door, the sound of the impact ringing loudly in the silent house. "Open! Fuck you!" he yelled, the outburst tearing from deep within him. His voice cracked, breaking the façade of composure he had been clinging to so desperately.

Leaning against the door, he slid to the ground, his back pressed against the unyielding wood. The coolness of the floor was a minor relief against the heat of his anger, but it didn't do much to help calm him. His mind replayed the baseball game—the runs, the cheers, the freedom—all imaginary. "It's just me here," he murmured, his voice hoarse. "Just me and these damn walls."

As he sat there, the imagined cheers faded into the distance, replaced by the all-too-real silence of the house. The intense contrast between his imagined freedom and his actual imprisonment gnawed at him—a slow, relentless festering of his mind.

The initial shock of being so thoroughly trapped morphed rapidly into a boiling rage, and he sprang to his feet, his breaths shallow and rapid.

"Damn you!" he screamed at the door. His hands were balled fists, and without thinking, he slammed one into the wooden panel. The dull thud of flesh against wood and the pain were unsatisfying, doing nothing to quell the storm raging inside him.

Bucky turned away from the door, his eyes scanning the room as if seeing it for the first time as a prison. Each piece of furniture, each decoration, seemed to mock him. With a roar, he swept a stack of books from a nearby table. They hit the floor with heavy thuds, pages fluttering and tearing.

"Fuck you," he muttered, turning his wrath on a vase sitting innocently

on the mantelpiece. "You all think you can keep me caged?" he yelled at the inanimate objects, his voice laced with derision and pain. He grabbed the vase and hurled it against the wall, where it shattered, pieces scattering across the hardwood floor like icy shards, mimicking and mocking his own fractured sanity.

The destruction felt momentarily cathartic, and he didn't stop there. He kicked a chair, toppling it with a crash that echoed through the quiet house. "Is this what you want, Klaus?" he shouted. "You want me broken? Well, you got it!"

His gaze fell on a photo frame on a side table—a staged, decorative piece, likely placed there by some designer without a second thought. Bucky grabbed it, his hands trembling, and stared into the smiling faces. "Perfect lives, perfect lies," he hissed, and he threw the frame down, watching the glass crack across their smiles.

The sound of footsteps thundering down the staircase cut through the bangs and glass shattering of Bucky's destruction. Klaus appeared at the foot of the stairs, his presence like a storm front, dark and looming. His eyes swept across the wrecked room—overturned furniture, shattered glass, and scattered books.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" Klaus's voice was a low growl, barely containing his rage as he stepped into the loungeroom, his gaze fixing on Bucky with sharp intensity.

Bucky, holding a lamp, looked up, his eyes red and his face tight with a mix of anger and desperation. "I can't take this anymore, Klaus! I can't breathe in this fucking house!"

Klaus strode over, his steps measured but filled with a barely restrained anger. "You think you can just destroy what I've given you? Do you know how easily I can take it all away?" He gestured broadly at the room, his voice rising with each word.

"You call this a gift?" Bucky shot back, throwing the lamp across the room. "It’s a prison! You keep me locked up like some trophy—don't you see? I'm losing my mind here!"

Klaus closed the distance between them, his face inches from Bucky’s. "This is for your protection, you ungrateful fool! Outside these walls, you'd be lost, or worse." His hands were clenched into fists at his sides, and the vein in his neck was throbbing with barely restrained anger.

"Protection? Is that what you call this?" Bucky's voice cracked. His

emotions were raw and exposed, with angry tears streaming down his face. Clenching his jaw, he wiped away the tears with the back of his hand, anger overpowering the grief. He straightened his posture, staring directly into Klaus's eyes, his voice steady despite the storm within. "I know he's out there, Klaus. I know because I've seen it with my own eyes."

Klaus's expression shifted, a flicker of confusion crossing his features before rage slowly seeped through. "What are you talking about?" he demanded, his tone turning icy.

"I went through your office," Bucky confessed, his voice a mix of defiance and desperation. "I found the reports and the lists of names. Buck's name was there, Klaus. He escaped. He's alive. And I need to be out there with him."

The confession hit Klaus like a physical blow, his face paling for a moment before a mask of fury took over. "You went behind my back?" he seethed, stepping closer, his presence menacing. "You invaded my private space?"

Bucky held his ground, although his heart raced. "Yes, I did," he said firmly. "Because I had to know. Because you keep me locked up in here like some sort of prisoner. You said you loved me! But you won't even let me go outside! You keep me stuck in here like some sort of pet! Is this what your love gets me!?" Bucky finished, his voice rising to scream at Klaus.

Klaus's voice was low and dangerous as he leant in, his breath hot on Bucky's face. "You belong to me, Bucky. Your life is here, not out there chasing ghosts."

"He's not a ghost!" Bucky shouted, his voice echoing in the large room. "He's real, and he's out there possibly looking for me! I need to find him!"

"Find him?" Klaus's tone was mocking, almost incredulous. "You think you're capable of surviving out there on your own? Do you think he's waiting for you? You're mine, Bucky. Here, you are alive. Out there, you're dead."

The words struck Bucky like physical blows, each one deepening the pit inside him. Klaus’s face was close enough that Bucky could feel his breath and see the dark promise in his eyes.

"You need to understand your place," Klaus continued, his voice softer

now but no less dangerous. "You are safe here because I allow it. You live because I keep you. Because I love you."

Bucky's breath hitched, his body tense as he absorbed the full weight of Klaus's words. The room seemed to close in around him, the shattered pieces around them a mirror to the shattering inside him.

With a sudden burst of courage, or perhaps recklessness, Bucky pushed against Klaus's chest, trying to put some space between them. "I am not your property," he stated, his voice trembling with a mix of fear and anger.

Klaus reacted swiftly, his hand shooting out to grip Bucky's arm tightly. "You will learn, flower. Either you live under my protection, or you don't live at all. You're mine or nobody's."

Klaus released him slowly, his gaze never leaving Bucky's face. "Clean this up," he ordered coldly, turning to leave the room. "And remember, this is more than others have. Be grateful."

Tension crackled in the air, thick and oppressive, as Bucky's frustration and desperation spiralled out of control. His breathing was ragged, each inhale sharp as he glanced wildly around the room, seeking something—anything that could express the rage inside him. His gaze landed on the heavy crystal ashtray on the side table.

Gripping the ashtray with a trembling hand, the cool weight of the crystal felt grounding for a brief, fleeting moment before the surge of his emotions took over again. With a guttural cry, born from a well of pain and anger, Bucky hurled the ashtray with all his might. The moment it left his hand, time seemed to slow, the consequences of his actions dawning on him even as the ashtray sailed through the air.

The ashtray struck Klaus with a solid thud, the sound shockingly loud in the otherwise silent room. Klaus stumbled slightly, the impact enough to push him forward a step. The ashtray fell to the floor with a smash, the noise of its landing echoing sharply.

For a heartbeat, everything stilled. Klaus paused, his posture rigid. The gravity of what Bucky had just done hung heavily between them, a line irrevocably crossed.

Bucky's heart pounded fiercely in his chest, his breath catching in his throat. Panic flared up as he realised the potential fallout of his impulsive act. "Klaus, I'm sorry!" he blurted out, his voice laced with panic and regret. "I didn't mean to—it was an accident. I was just so

angry, I..."

Klaus turned slowly to face him, his expression unreadable. The air around them seemed to thicken with tension and unsaid threats, making it hard for Bucky to breathe. Fear tightened its grip on him as he faced the repercussions of his rash decision.

As Klaus's face turned back towards him, a slow, deliberate pivot that seemed to stretch the moment into an eternity, Bucky could feel the temperature in the room drop. The iciness in Klaus's eyes was palpable, a harbinger of the storm that was about to break.

Bucky's instincts screamed at him to put as much distance between them as possible. He began to inch backwards, his movements cautious and slow, trying not to provoke Klaus further. Each step felt heavy, as if he were moving through molasses. The space between them grew incrementally as he carefully tried to manoeuvre himself out of the room.

"Klaus, please," he pleaded, his voice a strained whisper. The room was heavy with the tension of his plea, the words hanging in the air like smoke. He held his hands out in front of him, palms facing forward—an instinctive gesture of submission, of trying to calm the volatile situation he had ignited.

Klaus, however, remained unmoved, his stare unwavering and cold. The air around him seemed to shimmer with barely restrained fury, each second ticking by increasing the inevitability of his response. The quiet was suffocating, filled only by the heavy breaths that shuddered from Bucky's lips, each one shaky in its sound.

Panic surged through Bucky as he saw Klaus's muscles tense, preparing to charge. Without a second thought, Bucky turned and bolted, his feet pounding against the floor as he dashed through the living room. The room blurred into a streak of colours as he sprinted, the sound of Klaus's heavy footsteps thundering behind him.

Bucky's heart hammered in his chest, adrenaline fueling his desperate escape. He weaved through the hallways, dodging furniture and swinging around sharp corners with barely a moment's hesitation. The mansion seemed to transform into a labyrinth under his panic and frantic steps, each corridor leading to another, each room a potential dead end.

As he raced through the kitchen, Bucky's hand swept across a countertop in an attempt to speed up, knocking over a vase and

sending it crashing to the floor in a spray of water and shattered ceramic. He didn't dare glance back, but the growing loudness of Klaus's steps told him that the distance between them was closing fast.

Bucky's heart pounded in his chest as he scrambled up the staircase, his mind racing with panic and unadulterated fear. He was halfway up, his hand reaching for the next bannister, when he suddenly felt a vice-like grip on his ankle.

Klaus's hand clamped down hard, his fingers encircling Bucky's leg with an iron grip. In a single, violent motion, he yanked backwards, pulling Bucky from his precarious ascent.

The suddenness of the pull sent Bucky tumbling backwards, his grip slipping, and he felt his body being dragged back down the stairs. His back slammed against the steps with a jarring impact that knocked the wind out of him. Each step he hit on the way down sent a shock of pain radiating through his body, his limbs flailing helplessly as he tried to find something to hold onto.

As he came to a stop, sprawled and disoriented, at the base of the staircase, Klaus stood over him, his face twisted with fury. Bucky, gasping for breath and clutching at his bruised ribs, looked up at Klaus through blurred vision, fear and pain mingling in his eyes.

Klaus's expression was cold and unforgiving as he stepped closer, his stance menacing. Bucky tried to crawl away, his movements sluggish and painful, but Klaus followed, his shadow falling sinisterly over Bucky.

Klaus reached down swiftly, his hand clamping around Bucky's ankle with an iron grip. He yanked hard, pulling Bucky along the polished hallway floor. Bucky was on his stomach, his face pressing against the cold, hard wood, as he was dragged helplessly back through the corridor.

Bucky's desperation surged as he clawed frantically at the polished floor, his fingers scraping against the wood, searching for any hold that might slow his relentless dragging. His panic was tangible, with each breath heaving out in sharp gasps as Klaus’s grip on his ankle felt like an iron shackle.

"No! Please, Klaus! Stop!" Bucky screamed, his voice echoing through the hallway with a piercing wail. He reached out, his hands flailing, trying to grasp the frames of the doors they passed, but his efforts only resulted in brief, painful contacts that left his fingertips raw and his

nails broken.

"Klaus, please!" he continued, his voice breaking under the strain, tears streaming down his face as the realisation of his vulnerability and helplessness sank deeper. The cold, hard floor was unforgiving beneath him, and every inch he was dragged felt like a mile further into the lion's den.

As they approached another doorway, Bucky managed to hook his fingers around the frame, his body jerking as he tried to hold on. "No, no, no!" he cried out, the word repeating like a mantra, each utterance a mix of begging and terror. But the effort was futile. Klaus's strength was too much, and with a harsh tug, Bucky's grip slipped, his fingers painfully wrenching from the door frame.

The sound of his own voice, raw and hoarse from screaming, was drowned out by the sound of his body sliding across the floor and the roaring in his ears. The physical pain of being dragged, merged with the mental torture of the unknown outcome, created a pure terror that was wrapping around his lungs in the form of a panic attack.

"Please, don't do this!" Bucky’s voice cracked, the sheer terror evident as his words became more desperate.

Finally, Klaus stopped abruptly in the middle of the hallway. With a calculated manoeuvre, he twisted Bucky’s body around until he was lying on his back. Without hesitation, Klaus straddled him, pinning Bucky to the floor with the weight of his body. Bucky looked up, his breathing ragged and desperate, his chest heaving under the hold.

Klaus's face contorted with rage, his eyes blazing with unbridled fury as he looked down at his boy. The air between them crackled with tension, thick and palpable as the silence stretched into eternity. Then, without warning, Klaus's hand shot out, grabbing Bucky's shirt and pulling him up slightly, only to slam him back against the floor with a force that knocked the wind out of him.

"Trying to escape? You ungrateful brat!" Klaus spat, his voice venomous. Each word was punctuated by another shake, his grip on Bucky's shirt tightening until the fabric strained at the seams.

Bucky gasped for air, pain radiating through his back and head from the impact with the hard floor. Panic surged through him as he struggled under Klaus. He tried to push against Klaus's chest, his hands scrambling for leverage, but it was like trying to move a wall.

"You don't understand the dangers out there! You're mine to protect, mine to control! Mine to love!" Klaus yelled, his face inches from Bucky's, spit flying with his heated words.

Desperation clawed at Bucky's insides, his mind racing for a way out. He threw his arms up, trying to shield himself from Klaus's strikes, his movements frantic and driven by primal fear. But Klaus easily batted his arms aside, his next blow striking Bucky across the cheek with a backhand that turned his head sharply to the side, the sting of the hit mingling with the metallic taste of blood in his mouth.

Tears blurred Bucky's vision, not just from the pain but from the overwhelming sense of helplessness and vulnerability. He tried again to push Klaus off, his efforts growing weaker. Each attempt to free himself seemed to only fuel Klaus's anger more, his actions growing more unhinged and violent.

Klaus's hands moved to Bucky's neck, squeezing tightly, cutting off his air supply. "You think you can survive without me? You think he's out there waiting for you?" Klaus hissed, his grip tightening. "You're nothing without me!"

Bucky's eyes widened in terror as he clawed at Klaus's hands, his breaths coming in short, desperate gasps. The edges of his vision began to darken, the lack of oxygen making his head spin. His struggles became sluggish as his body started to succumb to the inevitable, and his mind and lungs started screaming for air.

As Klaus's fingers tightened around Bucky's throat, his gaze locked onto Bucky's with a disturbing intensity. "I love you so much, my flower," he whispered hoarsely, the words twisted by the cruel contradiction of his actions. His eyes, usually so commanding and fierce, now shimmered with a manic gleam, unsettling in their earnestness.

Tears streamed down Bucky's cheeks, mingling with the creeping coldness of dread as his vision blurred and his lips began to take on a shade of blue. The room seemed to spin slowly around him, the edges darkening as he stared up into Klaus's face—his protector, his captor, the source of his deepest, twisted affections and his darkest fears.

In a desperate bid, Bucky's hands flailed weakly, reaching up to grasp at Klaus's face, his fingers trembling and lacking strength but driven by instinctive fear. His palms slapped clumsily against Klaus's cheeks, leaving no mark or impact as his lungs screamed for air.

Klaus, peering deeply into Bucky's fading gaze, seemed momentarily dazed and entranced by the sheer terror he saw reflected back at him. His expression faltered, a brief flicker of uncertainty crossing his features as he witnessed the life draining from his boy. For a moment, it seemed as if he might release his grip, swayed by the visceral fear and pleading in Bucky's eyes.

But then, as if snapping back to some harsh resolve, Klaus's features hardened once more. His grip loosened just enough to allow a whisper of air to escape Bucky's lips—not enough to free him, but enough to edge him back from the brink of unconsciousness.

"You need to understand. This is because I love you," Klaus whispered, his voice eerily calm and unnervingly serene. "You can't leave me. You won't survive out there without me. This is for our future—together."

As Klaus spoke, Bucky's feeble attempts to push him away turned into desperate clutching, before even then his body became too weak and his hands collapsed beside his head. Unable to draw any more air, his lungs were completely cut off from oxygen.

"K-Kla..." Bucky managed to gasp out, his voice barely audible and his eyes bloodshot as capillaries began to burst from the brutal constriction. The raw desperation in his voice seemed to pierce Klaus's resolve momentarily. Releasing his stranglehold, Klaus instead seized Bucky by the jaw, his grip forceful. He yanked Bucky's face up to meet his, pressing their lips together in a punishing kiss that was more a claim of ownership than a sign of affection.

Bucky's lips, tinged blue from the lack of oxygen, felt the bruising demand of Klaus's kiss. Each breath he stole burned his lungs as much as it brought relief. Each breath was an effort to regain what had been forcefully denied. Klaus's hands, though no longer around Bucky's throat, remained firmly on his jaw, holding him in a restraining and possessive grip.

Klaus's fingers loosened, allowing Bucky a moment to catch his breath. As he withdrew, the chill of the air seemed to sting more sharply over Bucky's overly sensitive skin. Klaus straightened his coat with a swift, calculated movement, his demeanour composed as he towered over Bucky.

"Collect yourself," Klaus commanded, his tone admitting no argument as his cold, distant eyes swept over Bucky. He assessed the impact of his actions with a critical eye. "Then go clean up the mess you made."

As Klaus's footsteps receded, each echo against the hardwood floors punctuated the heavy silence left in his wake. Bucky lay crumpled on the ground, each breath a sharp, painful gasp as he struggled to regain his senses. The physical pain from the altercation was intense, but it was the sense of betrayal and deep heartache that cut the deepest.

With considerable effort, Bucky dragged himself up into a seated position against the wall. He pulled his knees tightly to his chest, wrapping his arms around them in a desperate attempt to shield himself from the overwhelming emotions and pain. As the sound of Klaus's departure finally faded away, the silence of the house closed in around him.

Tears streamed silently down Bucky's face, his quiet sobs barely audible. "I want to go home," he sobbed quietly to himself, the words whispered into the chill of the empty hallway, a plea and a reminder of how far from safety and home he actually was.

Chapter 23: The Cold Dawn

Chapter Notes

> I’m so sorry guys for the late update! I’ve been doing my corrections interviews for two prisons and everything is so chaotic!
>
> I hope you guys enjoy!

The air was thick with anticipation as Buck huddled over the tattered map on the floor, the soft light of the hidden lantern casting eerie shadows over the paper. The farmhouse where he and his ragtag team had taken refuge was quiet—the kind of silence that clings to a room before the storm hits and chaos unfolds. Buck threaded his fingers through his hair tiredly as he studied the map before tugging the growing strands in frustration at all the X's on the map, marking his failed attempts to find Bucky.

Each X marked on the map was a wound, a reminder of the false hope that had crumbled under each dead end. Buck felt a growing anger and sadness twist together in his chest, squeezing his heart and lungs. His knuckles pressed against the wooden floor, his breaths uneven and catching as he looked at each mark he had made in ink. How many empty houses and hastily deserted safehouses had he searched, desperately clinging to the hope of finding his love?

Sighing, he punched the wooden floor softly before tracing the lines with his fingers. Calloused and stained with the dirt of countless rough days, he traced the network of roads snaking through German-occupied territory like veins, each one leading nowhere. He couldn't help but feel the sting of failure prick at his eyes. Each of those marks was another day Bucky had spent in the General's hands. Another day of not knowing if he was still alive or what new horrors he was enduring.

The soft creaking of the farmhouse around him only deepened the sense of solitude that hadn’t dissipated since Bucky had been ripped from him. The ragtag team that had become his makeshift family slept in scattered corners of the house, their snores and soft breathing the only sounds in the still night.

Buck leant back, pressing his fists against his eyes, as if trying to push away the frustration and pain that gnawed at him. "I promised you,

Bucky," he muttered to the empty room, his voice hoarse and thick with emotion. "I promised I'd find you."

The words hung heavily in the air, mingling with the shadows that seemed to press in closer like poison. He felt like he was fighting against an unstoppable tide—a relentless force pushing back every effort he made to find Bucky. The pressure of time slipping away clawed at him each day that passed, driving the knife of failure deeper into his chest.

He stared at the X's on the map again, his jaw tightening as determination welled inside him. He couldn't fail—not when he was this close. His gaze moved to the circled estate he had found on the map, far away from the hustle and bustle. And it was the only lead left that hadn't yet turned into another X.

Buck pressed his palm against the paper, the weight of his hand was an unspoken oath to Bucky. He would see Bucky's face again, hold him, and tell him they would make it through together, just like they had before, and that he loved him so much.

Failure was not an option.

Buck's eyes moved back and forth over the map, his gaze intense and focused as he memorised every detail of the route to the estate. Each twist and turn of the road was engraved in his mind. The farmhouse around him creaked softly, the beams settling under the weight of night, and the soft lantern light flickered, casting long, dancing shadows across the wooden floor.

He leant closer, his finger hovering over the marked estate, barely touching the paper as if afraid to shatter the only lead he had. "This has to be it," he muttered, more to himself than anyone else. The possibility of finally finding Bucky was both exhilarating and terrifying.

"Brady," Buck called softly, not wanting to break the heavy stillness completely. The man in question looked up from where he sat against the wall, his face shadowed but alert now.

"Got something?" Brady's voice was low, a soft rasp that spoke of too many days in the cold and not enough sleep.

"Yeah," Buck replied, his voice tight. "I think I've found where they're holding him."

Brady pushed himself up, his movements careful and silent, and came to kneel beside Buck. He peered at the map, his brow furrowing as he took in the details.

Brady's eyes studied the circled estate on the map, then flicked up to meet Buck's determined gaze. "Are you sure about this?" he asked, a hint of scepticism in his voice. He knew the weight on Buck's shoulders from all of their many disappointments and the heaviness of hope that had been dashed time and again and he didn't want to get Buck's hopes up too high if it wasn't a solid lead.

Buck nodded, swallowing the lump in his throat. "As sure as I can be without actually seeing him there. The intel lines up, and it's the best lead we've got." His voice was steady, even if his hands were not.

Brady leant back on his heels, running a hand through his hair. "It's well out of the way..." His eyes were sharp, calculating the risk and the feasibility.

"Exactly," Buck replied, tapping a section of the map. "It's quiet. Unassuming. Klaus thinks he's being clever, keeping him off the main sites and away from the prying eyes. He's arrogant—he thinks no one would guess he'd hide him in plain sight like this."

Silence fell between them for a moment, both men lost in their thoughts. Brady was the first to break it. "When do you want to move?" His tone suggested it wasn't a question of if, but when.

Buck's response was immediate, fueled by the urgency that had been building in him since he'd laid his fingers on the map. "At first light. We need to prep tonight. Go over everything again—routes, fallbacks, and what to do if things go south. We can't afford to make mistakes. Not with this. Not with him."

Brady nodded, his expression hardening with determination. "I'll round up the others shortly and get them briefed. We'll need every hand on deck if we're going in."

"Thank you, Brady," Buck said, clapping a hand on his friend's shoulder, gratitude mingling with the sadness in his eyes. "I couldn't do this without you guys."

"You don't have to," Brady replied, clapping back, a brotherly acknowledgement of the deep bond forged between them.

Buck's voice cracked, as he looked in Brady's eyes. "What if he's not

the same, Brady? What if Klaus has..." The words hung heavily, choked by the bitter memories of what he had witnessed—Bucky's spirit seemingly crushed, his vibrant self reduced to a shadow in Klaus's ruthless grip.

Brady, ever the pillar of quiet strength, responded with a comforting firmness, his hand squeezing Buck's shoulder reassuringly. "Whatever state he's in, we'll bring him back," he stated with conviction. "And we'll deal with it together. All right?" His voice, though gentle, carried a strength behind it.

Buck blinked away the moisture threatening to spill from his eyes, the scenes from that day when Klaus had brought Bucky back to camp to 'teach him a lesson' replaying vividly in his mind. He remembered the helplessness that had gnawed at his insides as he watched Bucky, broken and pleading, trade his freedom for Buck's safety—a trade that tore him apart, he'd wished that Bucky had chosen himself for once.

"How can he ever come back from that?" Buck murmured, more to himself than to Brady. "He looked at me... and it was like he was miles away. Like Klaus had driven him into a place so dark he couldn't see a way out."

Brady's gaze softened, his eyes reflecting the flickering lantern light and the creases that had taken home on his face during the war. "We've seen a lot of darkness, Buck. But we've also seen what people can overcome," he said, shifting to sit beside his friend, sharing the burden in the quiet. "Bucky's strong—stronger than he knows. And with you waiting for him, with us all behind him, he can find his way back."

"But what if he can't?" Buck's voice trembled with the raw edge of vulnerability. "What if he's lost to whatever the General has done to him?"

"Then we'll help him rediscover who he was, and if need be, we'll help him become someone new. Someone he can be proud of, no matter the scars," Brady replied, his tone soft and comforting. "The Bucky who laughed with you, who loved you—that man is still in there. And if there's even a flicker of him left, we'll fan it into a flame."

For a moment, Buck was silent, absorbing the weight of Brady's words and letting them fortify the fragile hope that clung stubbornly within him. Finally, he nodded with a decisive tilt of his head as he wiped at his eyes. "We can't let Klaus be the end of his story," he agreed, his

voice gaining strength from Brady's words.

"That's the spirit," Brady encouraged, "Now, let's start planning. We're going to bring him home, Buck. And we're going to be ready for whatever comes next."

The determination that settled over Buck then was palpable, a transformative force that steeled his gaze and squared his shoulders.

"Brady," Buck said, his voice low and somewhat hesitant, breaking the silence that had settled between them.

"Yeah, Buck?" Brady's response was instant.

Buck took a deep breath, his fingers tapping lightly on the floor as he gathered his thoughts. "Back when we escaped the march... you had a chance to head home, didn't you?" His eyes searched Brady's, seeking not just answers but understanding.

Brady set down the pen he was using, his actions deliberate, giving full attention to Buck. He nodded slowly, a wistful yet hardened look crossing his features. "I did," he confirmed, his voice steady but reflective.

"Why didn't you take it?" Buck's question hung in the air, tinged with both curiosity and a deep-seated need to understand the bonds that tied them so tightly together.

Brady sighed, leaning back on his hands as he collected his thoughts. "You know, I thought long and hard about it," he began, his gaze drifting past Buck as if seeing the past unfold before him. "But after everything we've been through, leaving felt like I'd be abandoning more than just a place. It felt like I'd be leaving a part of myself behind."

He paused, his eyes returning to meet Buck's. "Plus," he continued, a slight smile tugging at the corner of his lips. "I couldn't just head back knowing you were still out here, hell-bent on turning over every stone in Germany. Someone's gotta keep you from charging headlong into trouble without at least a semblance of a plan."

Buck chuckled softly, the tension easing slightly at Brady's attempt at humour, but his gaze remained intense and focused. "And Bucky?" he probed further, the mention of his name loaded with unspoken emotion.

Brady's expression fell, his smile fading as he acknowledged the heart of Buck's inquiry. "Especially Bucky," he affirmed solemnly. "Leaving felt wrong when we didn't have him back. Our team... it's not complete without him. I couldn't just pack up and pretend like I wouldn't be leaving part of my soul behind with you guys."

His voice grew firmer, a testament to the bond forged under the harshest conditions this war had thrown at them. "He's the one who would stand last to ensure we all made it, and now it's our turn to ensure he makes it back with us. No man left behind, Buck. Not now, not ever. And not Bucky. I won't leave this shithole of a country until we have him back."

Buck nodded slowly, a mixture of appreciation and respect washing over him. "Thank you, Brady," he murmured, the gratitude resonating deeply for the man in front of him and for the guys who also hadn't left. "For sticking with me through this. For not giving up on him... on us."

Brady shrugged modestly, though his eyes held a fierce loyalty that words could barely convey. "We're family, Buck. You don't abandon family, not when they need you most." He picked up his pen and resumed his task, but his voice carried a final, firm promise. "We'll get him back, Buck. And then we'll all head home together."

Their eyes met once more, a silent promise passing between them, strengthened by shared struggles and a steadfast commitment to the hard road ahead of bringing Bucky home.

As Brady went to wake the others, Buck stayed behind, his gaze locked on the map. His mind replayed every moment he and Bucky had shared—every laugh, every challenge they had faced together, and every quiet moment that spoke of a love that couldn't be contained. Each memory only helped to strengthen his resolve further.

He couldn't, and he wouldn't let Bucky down. Not when he was possibly so close to bringing him home. The stakes were too high, and the cost of failure was too great to contemplate. Buck's jaw set firmly, his eyes burning with fierce determination as he thought over the whole plan. No matter what happened, he was going to get Bucky out of that bastard's hands.

This was more than a rescue. It was a reclaiming of a life stolen, of promises kept, and of their future that hung in the balance. Buck folded the map, tucking it safely into his jacket. He stood, staring out

the small, dusty window at the stars that blanketed the night sky.

"Hang on, Bucky," he whispered into the darkness. "I'm coming for you." His voice was a soft vow carried away by the gentle night breeze, a silent promise that he intended to keep, no matter the cost.

Buck turned away from the window, inhaling deeply as the cold air settled in his lungs. The farmhouse was still quiet, but the men were stirring now, their hushed voices filling the darkness with murmurs of preparation and the shuffling of equipment. Brady returned, his face serious, and nodded towards the back room where the rest of the group was assembling.

Buck joined them, his resolve hardening as he stepped into the circle of men who had become his family. He laid out the map on the makeshift table, tracing the route to the estate as they gathered closer.

"Here's the plan," he began, his voice steady and clear. "We'll move at first light. Our approach will be silent and fast. We don't know what we're walking into, so we need to be ready for anything. We'll have three groups: one covering the main entrance, one securing the perimeter, and the third infiltrating the building."

The team listened intently, nodding at intervals. Their faces were a mix of determination and uncertainty, but no one questioned the mission. They knew the stakes and the risks. They had all lived through too many horrors not to understand what Klaus could be doing to Bucky, and the Russians wanted to bring down the General who had caused so much destruction and pain to their fellow comrades.

Brady pointed to the section of the map Buck had circled. "What if we run into resistance?"

Buck straightened, his eyes steady. "We neutralise it quickly, but quietly. We can't afford any alarms going off. This has to be clean."

"Are you sure about the guard's presence?" asked Yuri, his brow furrowed in thought.

Buck shook his head, his expression serious but grave. "I'm not sure," he admitted, "but this is the closest we've gotten to finding Bucky and Klaus. We can't afford to let this opportunity slip by."

The men exchanged glances, their nods of agreement conveying the gravity of the situation. Determination settled on their faces. This

wasn’t an opportunity any of them were willing to give up.

"All right," he continued. "Get your gear together. We've got a long night ahead of us."

As the team moved away to prepare, Buck lingered by the map. He couldn't help but picture Bucky alone in that estate, perhaps in chains, waiting for a rescue that had taken far too long. The image gnawed at him, twisting the knot of pain tighter in his chest. He turned the map over, and for a moment, he allowed himself to close his eyes and breathe.

He could still remember the sound of Bucky's laughter, the warmth of his embrace, and the love in between shared kisses. Those memories were more than motivation—they were the fire that fueled his drive, the light that pushed back against the encroaching darkness of war, and the General.

When he opened his eyes again, his gaze was fierce, and his resolve was unshakable. The faint glow of dawn had begun to stretch across the horizon, and the farmhouse was alive with quiet movement as the team prepared to set out.

Buck glanced down at the map one last time, his finger tracing the path towards the estate. He pressed his palm against the paper, trying to ground himself. By the end of the day, he could have his Bucky back in his arms, where he belonged.

Tracing his fingers along the map, he could picture every twist and turn that would lead them there—the estate lying hidden deep within the woods.

"I'm coming, Bucky," he whispered again, his voice hardening as he tucked the map into his coat pocket and slung his rifle over his shoulder. The promise was clear, carried away by the soft breeze that rustled through the farmhouse.

As the team filed out, the cold morning air stung their faces, and the weight of the mission settled firmly on their shoulders. They moved silently through the fields, the farmhouse fading into the mist behind them. Each of their footfalls echoed across the quiet landscape, the frosty ground crunching softly beneath their boots. Their breaths formed misty clouds that hung in the air momentarily before disappearing into the fog.

The path ahead was fraught with danger, but their footsteps remained

steady as they pushed forward, their eyes set firmly on their task at hand. They wove between the trees and crossed the shallow streams, the terrain growing denser and more treacherous as they headed towards the estate. The crisp crunch of leaves beneath their feet and the occasional crack of a branch were the only sounds that broke the stillness of the morning.

Each step brought them closer to the estate, closer to Bucky, and closer to the moment of truth that had haunted Buck's dreams for far too long. With each stride, Buck's mind raced, envisioning every possible scenario they might face. His heart pounded with a mix of anticipation and fear, but the need for Bucky, burning fiercely in his chest, pushed him forward.

There could be no hesitation, no faltering. Bucky was out there, held captive, and Buck wouldn't rest until he was safe again. His team marched in perfect formation, their heads on a swivel, scanning the landscape in the frigid morning air as the rising sun cast a fog over them.

The silence of their approach was broken only by the subtle rustling of leaves and their carefully controlled breathing. They maintained watchful vigilance, knowing that even the slightest mistake could bring their plan crashing down. They kept their heads low and their weapons ready, each step calculated and purposeful.

The rising sun painted the landscape in eerie shades of grey, the fog clinging stubbornly to the trees, the metres ahead barely visible through the mist. The air was thick with tension, the cold biting at their exposed skin as the promise of confrontation loomed ever closer.

The moment of truth was closing in.

Chapter 24: Tethered Shadows Of Devotion

The rain fell steadily outside, a constant patter against the windows of the estate, where Bucky sat motionless in the library. He was just a silhouette against the grey light, his forehead resting against the cool glass, his eyes fixed on the blurred and forbidden world outside. The chill from the window seeped into his skin, but it was a numbness he welcomed, a distraction from the ache deep within his chest.

He felt hollow and emotionally exhausted from the latest confrontation with Klaus, the bruises and scrapes still fresh and painful. Each harsh word and cold dismissal of his wants had stripped away pieces of his hope, leaving him adrift in a state of confusion and sadness.

Why did Klaus, who professed his love, keep him so caged and coddled? Why did Buck's last words after the separation haunt him, spitting that he was disgusting? The questions circled in his mind, unanswerable and tormenting against his abused mind.

How long had it been since he'd known or been shown true kindness, warmth, and love?

Bucky pressed his forehead harder against the glass, the cold biting into his skin as if to anchor him to the moment and keep the swell of his thoughts from capsizing him completely. Rain traced erratic paths down the window, distorting the view of the gardens where he dreamed of being able to roam freely—a freedom as distant as the fading storm on the horizon.

The library is usually a sanctuary for him, yet tonight felt more like a chain wrapping around and caging him in its solitude. Books lined the walls from floor to ceiling, their spines a mosaic of forgotten knowledge and untouchable worlds, each title a whisper of someplace else, somewhere better. But even though they seemed to mock him now, their tales of adventure and romance stark contrast to the brutal reality of his existence under Klaus's watchful eye.

With a deep, shaky breath, Bucky shifted slightly, the leather of the couch sticking to his skin uncomfortably. He wondered how much of his day-to-day life was under surveillance. Klaus's obsession didn't just border on possession—it was an all-encompassing, suffocating cloak that left little room for anything else. Each step he took within these walls was likely catalogued, with each attempt at autonomy viewed as

a betrayal.

"Why?" he whispered into the quiet room, the word a brittle sound in the vastness of the estate. It wasn't just a question anymore. It was a plea, a need to understand the mechanics of a love that was so entangled with control and dominance and how he fit into all of it.

Was it love, though? Or was it something darker—something more sinister masquerading as devotion? Klaus had said it was all to keep him safe, that the world outside these walls would chew him up and spit him out without a second thought. But in his heart, Bucky felt trapped, the weight of the invisible chains heavier with each passing day.

His eyes moved from the window to his reflection in the darkened glass. The man staring back at him looked broken, his eyes hollow and shadowed, not the vibrant soul who once laughed so easily and who once dreamed of a future so bright it was blinding. Those dreams seemed folly now, just cruel jokes whispered in the dark to keep the creeping loneliness at bay.

The door to the library creaked open, a sliver of light cutting through the shadows, announcing Klaus's arrival. Bucky didn't need to look to know it was him. The air changed with his presence, becoming heavier and more electric. He felt Klaus's eyes on him, the weight of his gaze as tangible as a physical touch.

"Bucky," Klaus called softly, his voice a velvet caress that belied the poison underneath. Bucky remained silent, not trusting his voice, his body was tense and ready to recoil. He heard the soft thud of Klaus's footsteps as he approached, the familiar scent of his cologne wrapping around him, a scent that once offered pain, then comfort, and now signalling trouble once again.

As Klaus sat down next to him, the couch shifted under his weight. There was a pause, a moment of hesitation, before Klaus reached out, his hand lifting to trace the line of Bucky's jaw with a tenderness so far from the pain his hands had delivered earlier.

"You shouldn't isolate yourself like this," Klaus murmured, his thumb brushing lightly against the bruise on Bucky's cheek—a reminder of their earlier conflict. "It's not good for you."

Bucky's laugh was hollow, bitter, and raspy. "And what is good for me, Klaus? Because I don't think we agree on the definition."

Klaus sighed, the sound heavy with an emotion Bucky couldn't quite place. "I know you're upset. I know you don't understand why things have to be this way. But it's for the best. You're safe here. With me."

The words were meant to comfort and soothe, but they wrapped around Bucky like chains, tightening with every syllable. Safe. Was it safety if it stripped him of his will and of his very identity? Was it protection if it felt like imprisonment?

"You say you do this because you love me," Bucky said, rasping quietly, finally turning to meet Klaus's gaze. "But love shouldn't hurt like this, Klaus. It shouldn't make me feel like I'm nothing without you."

Klaus's expression tightened and then softened, the edges of his usually impenetrable facade crumbling just slightly. "Everything I do, I do for you, to protect you. Can't you see that?"

But Bucky could only shake his head. The mismatch between Klaus's words and his actions is too great to bridge. "Love shouldn't feel like a cage and hurt like that," he whispered, turning back to the window, the rain a silent mirror to the tears he no longer had the strength to shed.

Bucky leant his head against the cool glass once more, a deep sigh escaping him as he closed his eyes, wishing for a different world, a different life—one where love was not a weapon.

As the rain's steady beat continued, Klaus moved closer, his presence enveloping Bucky in an almost suffocating warmth. He reached out, his fingers gentle, and began a hauntingly possessive dance through Bucky's hair.

Klaus's fingers stilled as they grazed the bullet scar, a painful reminder of the violence and vulnerability he'd endured that day, and Bucky couldn't suppress the shudder that ran through him.

Klaus noticed the tension in Bucky's body and paused, his touch lingering on the scar. "This scar," he began in a voice that mixed regret with something darker, "is a reminder of the cruelty of the world outside, a world that nearly took you from me. I can't—I won't let that happen again."

Bucky's eyes fluttered open, meeting Klaus's gaze. There was sincerity in Klaus's eyes, a fervent intensity that bordered on desperation. It was this look that had once drawn Bucky in and made him feel

cherished and unique not so long ago. But now, it only served to highlight the chasm between their perceptions of care and control.

"You see threats and enemies where I see freedom and choices," Bucky responded softly, his voice barely rising above the patter of the rain. "You think keeping me here, locked away, is saving me. But Klaus, you're suffocating me."

Klaus's hand stilled in Bucky's hair, and for a long moment, there was only the sound of the crackling fire and the storm outside. Finally, Klaus spoke, his voice low and fraught with an emotion he rarely, if ever showed. "I can't lose you, my flower. Everything I've done and every decision I've made has been to protect you. To keep you safe."

Bucky tensed, the familiar narrative unwinding. It was a story Klaus often recited—one where the world was full of threats and only Klaus could shield him from them. It was manipulative, Bucky knew, yet part of him fluttered with the perverse comfort those words brought, but Bucky wasn't looking to give Klaus an easy out.

"But who protects me from my protector?" Bucky asked, his question hanging heavy in the air. "Who saves me from the loneliness, pain, and terror that come with being your 'safe and protected' prisoner?"

Klaus pulled back slightly, his expression one of hurt crossed with incredulity and a sliver of annoyance. "Is that what you think you are? A prisoner?"

Bucky nodded slowly, the truth of the statement settling into his bones. "Yes," he whispered. "Because love, the kind I need, doesn't look like this. It doesn't hurt like this."

Klaus's gaze was intense as he processed his boy's words, his jaw clenching and unclenching as he battled with the implications. After a long pause, he reached out again, but this time, his touch was different—less claiming, more questioning.

"I love you, my beautiful flower, more than I've loved anything or anyone in my life," Klaus confessed, his voice cracking with the admission. "Tell me how to show you that. Tell me what you need."

The sincerity in Klaus's plea was palpable, and for a moment, Bucky saw the man he had slowly grown to care for—the man beneath the control, the pain, and the obsession. It gave him a sliver of hope, a fleeting sense that maybe, just maybe, there was a way through this darkness and torment.

"I need to feel like I'm here because I choose to be, not because I have to be," Bucky said, turning to face Klaus fully. "I need space to breathe and to be myself. I need trust, Klaus. I need you to hold me and make me feel safe. Not making me feel like I'm only a breath away from never breathing again. I don't want to feel what I felt last night ever again."

Klaus's expression shifted as he listened to Bucky's requests, his eyes clouding over with a mix of conflict and simmering annoyance. He held Bucky's gaze, his hand tightening slightly around Bucky's own. "Unlock the doors... Let you out alone," he repeated, almost to himself, as though tasting the absurdity of the idea on his tongue. The notion visibly unsettled him, his posture stiffening as the protectorate facade began to reassemble itself.

"I can't do that, my boy," Klaus finally said, his voice gentle yet firm, an edge of irrevocable finality lacing his words. "It's not safe. Not for you. The world outside... it's chaotic and dangerous. There are people who would hurt you and manipulate you—people who wouldn't hesitate to take advantage of you."

Bucky's heart sank, the fleeting sense of hope dissipating as quickly as it had appeared. The rejection stung, not because it was unexpected, but because part of him had begun to nurture the hope that Klaus might relent and might show him the trust and freedom he so desperately craved.

"But I need more than this," Bucky protested weakly, the fight draining from his voice. "I need to feel like I'm here because I want to be, not because I'm trapped."

Klaus sighed, a sound of wearied patience, and shifted to cup Bucky's face gently in his hands. "My boy, my love," he began, his thumbs stroking Bucky's cheeks tenderly, "you are here because I can protect you. Because what we have here," he gestured around the room, "is safer than anything out there. I do this not to cage you, but to guard the precious thing that is your life."

The manipulation was subtle, woven through words that sounded like care but tasted like poison. Klaus's rhetoric was skilled, a blend of affection and warning designed to bind Bucky tighter with threads of doubt about the world and his place in it outside the confines of the estate.

Bucky felt the familiar tug of confusion in the part of him that clung

to Klaus's words like a lifeline, even as another, smaller part rebelled against the implications.

Stockholm syndrome, a term he'd heard whispered by some before he'd been completely isolated, seemed to echo in his mind. He knew, intellectually, that Klaus's control was not love, not truly, but emotionally and psychologically, he was tethered to the man before him—his captor, his guardian, his world.

"Klaus, I..." Bucky's voice faltered, the internal conflict visible on his face. "I understand, I guess. But it feels like I'm suffocating sometimes."

Klaus's expression softened, and he pulled Bucky into a close, enveloping embrace. "I know, my boy," he murmured into Bucky's hair, his voice soothing. "And it pains me to see you in distress. Let's compromise. You won't be alone, but I'll take you outside, into the gardens, myself. We can walk together, share the fresh air."

It was a controlled concession, one that allowed Klaus to maintain his grip while offering Bucky the semblance of freedom he so desperately needed. It was enough to placate Bucky and keep him tethered, yet not enough to grant him the autonomy he truly sought.

Bucky nodded against Klaus's chest, the fight seeping out of him. He knew this was the best he could hope for, and part of him was grateful for even this small allowance. "Thank you, Klaus," he whispered, clinging to the momentary warmth and safety Klaus offered, the complex web of his emotions trapping him more effectively than any lock or key ever could.

As Klaus held him, the storm outside continued unabated, the sound of the rain against the windows a constant reminder of the world beyond Bucky's reach. Inside, the warmth of the fire and the solidity of Klaus's arms around him offered a comfort that was as much a prison as it was a sanctuary. Bucky closed his eyes, allowing himself to lean into the moment, into the embrace of the man who was both his jailer and his shield against the war and chaos beyond the walls of the estate.

Bucky's breathing evened out as he succumbed to the exhaustion that clung to his bones, the fight and flight of the evening leaving him drained. With his head resting on Klaus' lap, he slipped further into slumber, the tension slowly draining from his body. Klaus's fingers resumed their slow, methodical movements, stroking his hair with a

touch that belied the turmoil flowing within him.

In the quiet, Klaus sat motionless, Bucky's head resting gently in his lap. The soft, even rhythm of his boy’s breathing was a soothing melody in the otherwise silent space. Klaus watched him, his gaze intense and unwavering, tracing the bruises and peaceful lines of Bucky's face as he slept, untouched by the world's harshness in these fleeting moments.

The sight of Bucky, so vulnerable and so utterly dependent on the safety Klaus provided, ignited a fierce protectiveness in him. But alongside this protectiveness simmered a darker, more turbulent storm of emotions. Klaus clenched his fists tightly, his nails digging into the palms of his hands, the pain a delicious reminder of the tumult raging within him.

This boy, this beautifully broken creature, stirred something primal and possessive in Klaus—a need so profound and so visceral that it frightened him with its intensity. He wanted to peel back his boy’s skin and just climb inside to be closer to him.

Klaus’s thoughts darkened, coiling like smoke around his heart. His little flower affected him in ways that nothing else ever had. He evoked a love so deep it bordered on obsession, a need to protect that morphed too easily into a need to control.

The primal urge to keep Bucky safe—to shield him from the world’s cruelty—wrestled constantly with a darker desire to tear him down, to remake him into someone who could never, would never, leave Klaus’s side.

Bucky was too special, too exquisite, for a world that wouldn't understand his value and wouldn't cherish him as Klaus did. Every breath Bucky took was a whisper of life that Klaus felt was his alone to guard. The very thought of anyone else claiming a piece of Bucky and tainting this perfect illusion was unbearable.

As he sat there, Klaus’s mind wandered to dark corners, to thoughts of what he would do to those who might dare to come between him and his boy. If any force in this world tried to take Bucky away, they would have to contend with a wrath so severe and so absolute that no one would ever dare approach Bucky again.

Klaus would ensure that no hand but his would ever touch Bucky, and no eyes but his would ever get to linger on his beautiful form. He would rather destroy the beauty he adored so much than share it with

the world.

Klaus's eyes narrowed slightly as he contemplated these dark thoughts and promises, his fingers resuming their gentle path through Bucky's hair. He smoothed over the scar that marred the otherwise perfect landscape of Bucky's skin, each touch a reaffirmation of his vow to protect, to possess, and to envelop Bucky in an embrace so tight that the line between protection and absolute possession blurred into oblivion.

As Bucky shifted slightly in his sleep, a small sigh escaping his lips, and Klaus's expression softened. The harsh lines of his face relaxed, and for a moment, he was merely a man in love, terrified of losing the most precious thing in his life.

His touch became more tender, a silent apology for the poison that his love entailed, a quiet promise to always be the sanctuary, however gilded the cage might be.

"Nothing will take you from me," Klaus whispered, his voice a low murmur barely audible above the sound of Bucky's breathing. "You are mine, now and forever. And I will protect you, even from the shadows within myself." His promise filled the quiet room, a pledge mingled with an ominous truth, binding Bucky to him with chains forged from love and madness alike.

As Klaus gazed down at Bucky, lying vulnerable and quiet in his lap, his eyes traced over the visible marks that his own hands had wrought upon the pale, almost translucent skin. Each bruise and cut was a beautiful testament to the tumultuous nature of their relationship—a physical manifestation of Klaus's deep, often uncontrollable emotions.

The darkened skin around Bucky's throat, a cruel collar left by Klaus's tight grip during their confrontation last night, pulled a complex mixture of pride and remorse from deep within him. His fingers hovered over Bucky's face, barely touching the split lip and the harsh purpling of bruises that mapped a violent history across his otherwise flawless complexion. Klaus's heart thudded painfully against his ribcage as he contemplated the violence mingled with care, a dichotomy that defined the essence of his feelings for Bucky.

Klaus's touch was gentle, almost reverent, as he lifted the edge of Bucky's sweater, exposing the skin beneath.

There, in a script both elegant and eerie, was Klaus's name—carved into Bucky's lower back. The sight of his own name etched into

Bucky's skin was a reminder of the possessiveness that consumed him. It was as if, by marking Bucky so intimately, he could make his claim irrevocable, binding Bucky to him beyond the confines of mere emotional ties.

Klaus traced the carved letters with his fingertips, each stroke filled with a twisted tenderness. The texture under his fingers—a mix of smooth skin and the rough edges of scarred letters—was a palpable symbol of their twisted bond and relationship. This act of possession, so permanent and so painful, was meant to be a shield, a way to embed himself so deeply within Bucky that the thought of separation would be unimaginable.

Feeling the raised scars under his touch brought a complicated satisfaction to Klaus. It was proof that Bucky was his and that no matter what happened, there was a part of Bucky that would always carry Klaus with him. Yet, there was also a sharp stab of guilt—a rare, uncomfortable twisting in his gut that he usually managed to ignore. Seeing the physical evidence of his own obsession and the damage it had caused to someone he claimed to love was disconcerting.

Klaus's gaze softened as he watched Bucky stir slightly, blissfully unaware of the conflicted storm raging within the man who held him. In this moment of quiet, with the fire crackling softly in the background and the world outside reduced to shadows and rain, Klaus allowed himself to feel the full weight of his actions.

He leant down, pressing a soft kiss to the top of his flower's head, a silent apology for the scars he had caused and the ones only he could see. As he settled back against the couch, Klaus's thoughts were a tangled weave of utmost devotion to the boy and dominance, love laced with undeniable poison and darkness.

"Forgive me," he murmured, so softly it was more of a breath than a whisper, unsure if he was seeking absolution from his boy or from himself. "For all that I've done and all that I might still do." His words were a confession to the quiet room, a vow filled with both regret and an unspoken promise that no matter how dark the path, he would walk it if it meant keeping Bucky by his side.

Klaus gazed down at Bucky, his expression a mix of adoration and torment. The idea of his flower ever leaving him, of stepping out into a world where Klaus couldn't shield him or dictate the bounds of his existence, ignited a visceral fear and rage deep within him. The thought wormed its way through his mind, dark and twisted, growing

into a sharp, festering anger.

With a sudden, impulsive movement, Klaus's arms tightened around Bucky's waist, pulling him closer. His grip was firm and possessive, as if by holding Bucky tighter, he could meld their bodies and souls into one, erasing any notion of separation. The intensity of his hold was a physical manifestation of his internal vow—Bucky would always be his, and no force on earth could change that.

Bucky, caught in the deep throes of sleep, stirred restlessly under the tightened embrace. His brow furrowed slightly, a soft moan escaping his lips as he shifted, trying to find comfort within the confining grip. Even in his sleep, his body reacted to Klaus's possessiveness, an innate response to the suffocating closeness that bordered on claustrophobic.

Klaus watched the subtle changes in Bucky's expression, his heart beating a rapid tattoo against his ribcage. The raw need to keep Bucky close wrestled with the briefest flash of guilt for his harsh reaction. But as quickly as the guilt appeared, it was overwhelmed by the stronger, darker need to control and possess.

"Never leave me. I don't want to kill you, but if I can't have you, then I'll make sure no one else can either. They'll try and taint you, my beautiful flower, and I can't allow that to happen." Klaus whispered into the darkness, his voice low and rough with emotion.

His words were both a plea and a command, laced with the sharp edge of his growing agitation. In his mind, the mere thought of Bucky leaving was anathema, a scenario that brought with it a surge of jealousy and rage that was difficult to suppress.

As he held Bucky closer, Klaus felt a temporary relief wash over him, soothing the jagged edges of his growing need for blood. The physical connection—the warmth of his boy's body against his reaffirmed his resolve. He would do whatever it took to ensure Bucky never strayed too far and that his presence would be a constant in Klaus's carefully constructed reality.

In this moment, with his boy so close and entirely under his control, Klaus allowed himself to believe that everything was as it should be. The outside world—with its threats and chaos—could not touch them here. In the safety of this embrace, Klaus could almost believe in the sanctity of what they had, however twisted it might appear to the world outside their carefully built cage.

Chapter 25: Between Reality and Reverie

The early morning light filtered through the curtains, casting a gentle glow over the room and its occupants. Klaus lay awake, his gaze fixed solely on his boy's sleeping form beside him. The boy looked peaceful in sleep, his face relaxed and free of the tension that usually marred his waking hours. Klaus studied him intently, as if trying to memorise every line and curve.

Slowly, Klaus moved the covers down, exposing Bucky's bare chest. He reached out, his hand hovering for a moment before making contact with the warm skin. He rubbed his fingers lightly over Bucky's chest, tracing the lines of his muscles and feeling the steady rise and fall of his breathing. His touch was almost reverent—a strange mix of possessiveness and tenderness.

Bucky stirred slightly but didn't wake. Klaus's hand travelled lower, his fingers ghosting over Bucky's abdomen before moving back up and trailing over the bruises. He rested his palm against his flower's cheek, feeling the warmth of his skin and the softness of his hair that had fallen across his face. Bucky leant into the touch, even in sleep, seeking out the comfort and familiarity of Klaus's warmth and presence.

Klaus stared at him for several minutes, lost in thought. The intensity of his feelings for Bucky was overwhelming. This boy had become his entire world and the centre of his existence. The thought of losing him was unbearable—a dark void that he couldn't allow to exist. He glanced towards the window, noticing that the storm had cleared up, leaving the sky a pale, washed-out blue, and smiled, an idea popping into his head.

He returned his attention to his boy, who was still deeply asleep. Slowly, Klaus began to rub his hands over Bucky's chest again, this time with a bit more pressure. His fingers traced the contours of Bucky's body, mapping out the familiar territory with a sense of ownership and worship.

Bucky groaned softly, his body reacting instinctively to the touch. He shifted closer to Klaus, nuzzling his face into the pillow and letting out a little puff of air. Klaus's hand moved to his back, tracing the lines of his spine and the scar, feeling the warmth radiate from his skin. Bucky's breathing hitched slightly, a small sigh escaping his lips as he sought the comfort of Klaus's touch.

Klaus's other hand joined in, both hands now moving over Bucky's body in slow, deliberate motions. He felt the familiar scars and marks under his fingers—reminders of their tumultuous relationship.

Bucky shifted again, a small whimper escaping him as he moved even closer to Klaus, seeking the safety and warmth of his embrace. Klaus's heart swelled with a mix of emotions—love, possessiveness, fear, and a dark need to keep Bucky with him at all costs.

"You're mine, John Egan," he whispered softly, his voice barely audible. "No one will ever take you away from me."

Bucky stirred, his eyes fluttering open for a moment before closing again. He was still half asleep, not fully aware of what was happening. He mumbled something incoherent, his body instinctively pressing closer to Klaus, seeking comfort.

Klaus continued to stroke him, his hands moving with a gentle yet possessive touch. He knew that Bucky was trapped, both physically and emotionally, bound to him by a web of fear, dependency, and twisted affection, and that thought brought a dark satisfaction, a sense of power and control that he couldn't resist.

Bucky was his, completely and utterly, and he would do whatever it took to keep it that way, to keep his boy safe and by his side. As he continued to caress his boy's body, he felt a sense of calm settle over him, a momentary respite from the constant tumultuous storm that raged within him.

Bucky sighed again, his body relaxing under Klaus's touch. He was still asleep, lost in a world where Klaus's touch was both a comfort and a poison forced down his throat. Klaus watched him, his eyes dark with a mix of emotions, knowing that this moment of peace was fleeting. The world outside was still a threat, and he would do anything to protect his boy from it, even if it meant keeping him caged and hidden from the world forever.

Klaus could feel himself hardening in his sleep shorts and pushed himself against Bucky, grinding into him, seeking pleasure. Bucky moaned softly in his sleep but didn't wake. Klaus slipped his hands down to the waistline of Bucky's shorts and pulled gently, slipping them down and exposing him completely. Klaus groaned and rubbed himself against his boy's milky white thigh and pushed the tip between Bucky's thighs, thrusting slightly.

The heat of Bucky's skin against him was intoxicating. Klaus's

breathing grew heavier as he moved, his hand sliding down to grip himself, stroking slowly as he continued to grind against Bucky. He pressed his lips against Bucky's neck, tasting the faint taste of salt on his skin, and nipped lightly, leaving small marks that would serve as a reminder of this moment for them both later.

"Mine," Klaus whispered against Bucky's ear, his voice a low growl filled with possessive desire. He thrust harder, feeling the friction build and the pleasure intensifying with each movement. Bucky's soft moans and whimpers spurred him on, a symphony of sounds that fed his dark need.

Bucky stirred, his body instinctively responding to the touches, even in sleep. His hips moved slightly, seeking more of the contact that both soothed and trapped him. Klaus's hands roamed over his chest, pinching his nipples and eliciting a sharp gasp from Bucky.

"Yes, that's it," Klaus murmured, his voice thick with lust. "Just let go, my flower. Let me take care of you."

Bucky stirred, his body instinctively responding to the touches, even in sleep. His hips moved slightly, seeking more of the contact. Klaus's hands roamed over his chest, pinching his nipples and eliciting a sharp gasp from Bucky, whose eyes fluttered open, his body thrumming with pleasure.

The room was filled with the sounds of their bodies moving together, the soft rustle of sheets, and the increasingly urgent gasps and groans from Klaus. “Yes, that’s it,” Klaus murmured, his voice thick with lust. “Just let go, my flower. Let me take care of you.”

Bucky's dick strained against his stomach from the friction of Klaus’s thrusts. A soft moan escaped his lips, his mind still muddled with sleep, as he instinctively sought out the warmth and pleasure Klaus provided.

Klaus smirked and straddled Bucky, pinning him to the bed. He peppered Bucky’s neck with kisses and bites, grinding down on him, causing soft gasps to escape from Bucky’s mouth. The sensation was overwhelming—a mix of pain and pleasure that left him breathless.

“Mine,” Klaus whispered against Bucky’s skin, his breath hot and possessive. He brought his hand up and pushed two fingers into Bucky’s mouth. “Suck,” he commanded, his dark eyes gleaming with arousal.

Bucky obeyed, his lips wrapping around Klaus's fingers and his tongue swirling around them, coating them in spit. The taste of Klaus, mixed with the saltiness of his skin, sent a shiver down Bucky's spine. He sucked obediently, his eyes locked onto Klaus's, and the connection between them was electric and undeniable.

Klaus watched him, a mixture of approval and desire in his expression. He continued to grind his hips against Bucky's, the friction between their bodies creating an exquisite heat that drove him wild. He pulled his fingers from Bucky's mouth, leaving a trail of saliva that glistened in the dim light.

Without breaking eye contact, Klaus trailed his wet fingers down Bucky's chest, circling his nipples before pinching them roughly. Bucky arched into the touch, his body trembling with pleasure. He was caught in the web of sensations Klaus wove around him, each touch and each kiss a reminder of the twisted bond that held them together.

Klaus leant over Bucky and pulled open the drawer, grabbing a small can of jelly. Opening the can, he coated his fingers in a generous amount before tossing the can somewhere on the bed behind him. He rubbed his fingers together, warming the jelly, before trailing them down his boy's chest, his eyes dark with pleasure and want.

He spread his flower's legs, circling his hole with his slick fingers, spreading the vaseline. Bucky moaned, gripping Klaus's bicep roughly as Klaus pushed one finger inside him, thrusting it in and out slowly. Bucky's breath hitched, his body arching off the bed at the intrusion.

"Relax," Klaus whispered, his voice a seductive growl. He thrust his finger deeper, feeling Bucky's body clench around him. The sight and feel of Bucky opening up to him, surrendering to his touch, sent a wave of satisfaction through Klaus and straight down to his straining cock.

He added a second finger and then a third, stretching his boy further. Bucky's moans grew louder, his grip on Klaus tightening as he ground back down against Klaus' fingers. Klaus moved his fingers in a scissoring motion, preparing Bucky for what was to come. The tight heat around his fingers was intoxicating, with each movement drawing them closer to the edge.

Bucky's eyes fluttered closed, his body trembling with a mix of pain and pleasure at the stretch. He felt Klaus's lips on his neck, the gentle

kisses contrasting with the roughness of his fingers.

Klaus continued to work his fingers inside Bucky, the pace increasing as he felt Bucky's body relax and respond. He watched as Bucky writhed beneath him, the pleasure and pain mixing in a perfect symphony with the noises that escaped his red-bitten lips. The sight of Bucky's flushed face and the sound of his moans drove Klaus wild with desire.

"Mine," Klaus repeated, his voice a possessive whisper. He removed his fingers, eliciting a whimper from Bucky at the loss.

Klaus shifted his position, aligning himself with Bucky's entrance. He paused for a moment, savouring the sight of his boy beneath him, flushed and panting. The vulnerability and trust in Bucky's eyes made Klaus's heart race. Leaning down, he captured Bucky's lips in a fierce, claiming kiss, his tongue demanding and insistent as it explored the familiar territory.

"You're mine," Klaus growled against Bucky's lips, the words a vow and a warning. He pressed forward, breaching Bucky with a slow, deliberate thrust that made them both gasp. The tight heat of Bucky around him was intoxicating, a sensation that Klaus relished with every fibre of his being.

Bucky cried out, the sound a mixture of pleasure and pain, his body stretching to accommodate Klaus. The initial burn gave way to a fullness that made his toes curl. He clung to Klaus's shoulders, his nails digging into the skin as he tried to ground himself amidst the overwhelming sensations. Each movement sent sparks of pleasure coursing through him, his mind drowning in the intensity of the pleasure that was hitting him in waves.

"Klaus," Bucky whimpered, his voice trembling. "Please..."

Klaus smirked, a dark satisfaction gleaming in his eyes. "Please, what, my flower? Tell me what you need."

"More!" Bucky gasped, his hips instinctively lifting to meet Klaus's thrusts. "I need more."

Klaus began to move, each thrust deep and purposeful, his rhythm steady but unrelenting. He revelled in the way Bucky responded—the way his body yielded and trembled beneath him, for him. It was a dance of control and surrender, a testament to the power dynamics that defined their relationship.

“Look at you,” Klaus murmured, his voice rough with desire. “So beautiful, so perfect. Mine.”

Bucky’s breaths came in short, ragged gasps, each one a partner to the pleasure Klaus was building within him, and he wrapped his legs around Klaus' waist. The sensation of Klaus filling him and stretching him was almost too much to bear. His body tightened around Klaus, pulling him deeper and needing him closer.

As the pleasure built, Klaus’s movements became more urgent, his need for release growing with each passing moment. He could feel Bucky tightening around him, the evidence of his arousal pressing against their stomachs. Klaus reached down, wrapping his hand around Bucky’s straining member and stroking him in time with his thrusts.

“Oh God, Klaus,” Bucky cried out, his voice a desperate plea. “I can’t... I’m gonna...”

“Yes, you can,” Klaus urged, his voice a husky whisper. “Come for me, flower. Let me see you fall apart.”

Bucky’s cries grew louder, his body arching off the bed as he teetered on the edge of release, nails clawing down Klaus' chest, leaving red marks in their wake. Klaus’s name fell from his lips like a prayer, a desperate plea for the culmination of the pleasure that consumed him. Klaus watched him, his own climax building, as he drove them both towards the precipice, hips snapping with fervour.

With a final, powerful thrust, Klaus found his release, his body shuddering with the force of his orgasm. The sensation of Klaus filling him pushed Bucky over the edge, his own release crashing through him in waves of ecstasy. Their moans mingled, a symphony of pleasure that echoed in the stillness of the room.

“Klaus!” Bucky’s voice was a broken cry as his climax hit, his body convulsing with the intensity of it. He clung to Klaus, his nails leaving red trails down his back, grounding himself in the storm of overwhelming sensations.

Klaus collapsed onto Bucky, their bodies slick with sweat and trembling from the aftershocks of their passion. He held Bucky close, his possessive grip never wavering as they caught their breath. The storm within Klaus had momentarily abated, replaced by a fleeting sense of peace and fulfilment.

“Mine,” Klaus whispered once more, his voice a soft murmur against Bucky’s ear. He pressed a tender kiss to Bucky’s temple, his heart still racing.

Bucky closed his eyes, his body exhausted but content in Klaus’s arms. Despite the twisted nature of their bond, he found comfort in the warmth of Klaus’s embrace, knowing that for now, in this moment, he was safe and protected.

“Klaus,” Bucky whispered, his voice barely audible. “I...”

“Shh,” Klaus soothed, running his fingers through Bucky’s damp hair. “You don’t have to say anything. Just breathe, my flower. I’ve got you.”

Bucky’s eyes brimmed with tears, the overwhelming release leaving him trembling against Klaus’s chest. His fingers, weak and unsteady, traced Klaus’s skin as if seeking an anchor. He looked up, meeting Klaus’s dark eyes, and saw his own reflection staring back at him—spent, vulnerable, and raw. The sight was too much, and a soft whimper escaped his lips. He closed his eyes, turning away to escape the image of his own weakness.

Klaus snickered, watching his boy with a mix of amusement and dark affection. He leant down, his tongue flicking out to catch Bucky’s tears. The salty taste mingled with the remnants of their passion, a flavour that Klaus relished. He pulled back slightly, using his thumb to spread the tears and his spit over Bucky’s quivering lips.

“Shh, my boy, I’ve got you,” Klaus tutted softly. He captured Bucky’s lips in a bruising kiss, reopening the small cut that had already begun to heal. The metallic tang of blood filled their mouths, and Klaus groaned darkly, his hips stuttering against Bucky’s despite having just climaxed moments before. The mix of pleasure and pain was intoxicating, a heady blend that fueled his possessive desire.

Bucky’s breath hitched, a choked sob escaping him as he felt Klaus’s intensity renew. The tears continued to roll down his cheeks, mingling with the sweat and saliva that covered his face. Klaus leant back, his eyes roving over Bucky’s tear-streaked, spit-slicked, and blood-smeared visage.

“So beautiful,” Klaus sang in a worshipful tone, cradling Bucky’s face in his hands. His touch was paradoxically tender, a contrast to the roughness of their usual touch. Bucky’s body shook softly under the weight of Klaus’s watchful eyes, each tremor ripping through him.

“Klaus,” Bucky whispered, his voice barely more than a breath. His eyes fluttered open, filled with a mix of adoration and fear. “I...I don’t know...”

“Shh,” Klaus soothed, brushing his thumb over Bucky’s swollen lips. “You don’t need to say anything. Just feel.”

He leant down, kissing Bucky again, this time slower, savouring the taste of his boy. The connection between them was electric, with a charged current that left them both breathless. Klaus pulled back, his gaze softening as he looked at his boy, his thumb gently wiping away the fresh tears that had begun to fall.

“You’re mine, Bucky. Always,” Klaus whispered, his voice filled with conviction. “No one will ever take you from me.”

Bucky nodded, his heart pounding in his chest. Despite the intensity, despite the fear, there was a strange comfort in Klaus’s words. The possessiveness, the dark love—it was all he knew, all he could cling to in the maelstrom of his emotions.

Klaus’s hands moved to cradle Bucky’s face once more, his touch gentle and reverent. “So beautiful,” he repeated, his voice a hushed reverie. He pressed another kiss to Bucky’s lips, softer this time, a promise of their unbreakable bond.

Bucky’s body relaxed slightly, his tremors easing as he melted into Klaus’s embrace. The weight of Klaus’s body, the warmth of his touch —it grounded him and soothed the frayed edges of his nerves. He closed his eyes, allowing himself to be enveloped in the dark, possessive love Klaus gave him.

As they lay there, the room silent save for their soft breaths, the world outside seemed distant and unimportant. In that moment, there were only Klaus and Bucky, their hearts beating in a shared rhythm, their souls intertwined in a dance of dominance and submission.

"After we shower, I'll take you for a walk outside. The weather has cleared up a little. How does that sound?" Klaus said, his voice unusually gentle, a rare softness gracing his features.

Bucky's face lit up, and a rare rush of joy and excitement rushed through his veins. His eyes sparkled with genuine excitement as he propped himself up on his arms, staring up at Klaus with a mix of disbelief and happiness.

"You mean it?" Bucky asked, his voice trembling with hope. His body thrummed with happiness, a stark contrast to the overwhelming sensations he had just experienced minutes ago.

Klaus chuckled with a warm, indulgent sound. He ran his fingers through Bucky's hair, smoothing back the damp strands. "Yes, I mean it. You've been good, and I think a walk will do us both some good. A change of scenery, some fresh air."

Bucky's heart raced, a blend of excitement and gratitude flooding his senses. The prospect of going outside and feeling the sun on his skin and the breeze in his hair was almost too good to be true. He had been confined for so long that the idea of freedom, however brief, filled him with a sense of elation that momentarily eclipsed the reality of his situation.

Klaus stood up, extending a hand to help Bucky to his feet. "Come on, let's get cleaned up first," he said, guiding Bucky towards the bathroom.

The hot water of the shower cascaded over them, washing away the evidence of their earlier activities. Klaus's hands were gentle as he soaped Bucky's body, the touch almost reverent. Bucky closed his eyes, leaning into the touch and savouring the rare moment of tenderness. For these brief moments, the pain and poison of their bond seemed to dissolve.

Once they were both clean, Klaus handed Bucky a towel, his eyes softening as he watched his boy dry himself in a flurry of movement, his body vibrating with barely contained excitement. The anticipation in the air was palpable—the promise of the outside world just within reach.

They dressed quickly, and Bucky's excitement was contagious. Klaus couldn't help but smile at the way Bucky practically bounced on the balls of his feet, his eagerness shining through every movement.

"Ready?" Klaus asked, his hand resting on the doorknob once they had walked downstairs.

Bucky nodded eagerly, his eyes wide with anticipation. "Ready."

As they stepped outside, the fresh air hit Bucky's face, and he inhaled deeply, savouring the scent of rain and earth. The sky was clear, a brilliant blue stretching overhead, and the sun cast a warm glow over everything.

Bucky's heart soared, and the beauty of the world around them was almost overwhelming. Something he had once taken for granted was now something that he savoured and was so grateful for. To feel the grass underneath his feet and to smell the fresh, crisp air was something he'd never take for granted again.

For the first time in a long while, Bucky felt free. He twirled around, his eyes darting to the sun and the clouds, the swaying trees, and the vibrant life all around. He momentarily forgot the confines of his captivity, lost in the euphoria of the moment.

Klaus kept a firm grip on Bucky's hand as they walked, not letting Bucky stray too far ahead. They strolled through the garden, the flowers in bloom painting a vivid tapestry of colors. Bucky's eyes darted around, taking in every detail, and his senses were alive with the sights and sounds of nature all around him.

As they reached an open patch of grass, Bucky let go of Klaus's hand and ran a few steps forward before Klaus could react. Klaus's heart clenched, a flash of anger and fear surging through him. For a split second, he thought Bucky was trying to run away. His jaw tightened, and his eyes darkened as he prepared to call out.

But then Bucky stopped a few feet ahead and swung an imaginary baseball bat. The motion was smooth and practiced, and Bucky chuckled gently to himself, completely lost in his own world. Klaus's anger dissipated, replaced by a reluctant amusement.

"What are you doing, flower?" Klaus asked, his voice tinged with a mix of amusement and residual irritation.

Bucky turned to him, his face alight with happiness. "I'm hitting a home run," he said, his voice filled with childlike glee. "It's the bottom of the ninth, bases loaded, and I just won the game."

Klaus chuckled, shaking his head. "You've got quite the imagination."

Bucky laughed, a sound so genuine and free that it made Klaus's heart clench again, but this time with a different kind of emotion. For this brief moment, Bucky was free, lost in the fantasy he had created. All the weight on his shoulders seemed to lift, replaced by the simple joy of pretending and being allowed to come outside.

"Thank you, Klaus," Bucky said softly, walking back to him and taking his hand. "This is... it's wonderful."

Klaus smiled, a genuine warmth in his eyes. “You deserve it, my boy. I want you to be happy.”

They continued their walk, the silence between them comfortable and companionable. Bucky felt a sense of peace settle over him—a rare tranquillity that he cherished. At this moment, he was free, the world was open and bright, and he was walking beside the man who had let him get a taste of what it was to truly appreciate the world around him.

As they wandered through the estate, Klaus kept a firm yet gentle hold on Bucky, never letting him stray too far. He couldn’t afford to lose him, not even for a moment. The thought of Bucky slipping away, of losing his precious boy, sent a chill down his spine. Klaus’s grip tightened slightly, a silent reminder to himself of the need to maintain control.

Bucky, oblivious to Klaus’s inner turmoil, revelled in the freedom of the open space. He twirled around, his laughter ringing out like a melody. The sun shone brightly, casting a golden glow over everything, making the world seem almost magical.

As they reached a secluded spot in the garden, Bucky sank down onto the grass, leaning back and staring up at the sky, threading his fingers through the grass, and digging into the ground below. Klaus joined him, sitting close, his presence a protective shadow. Bucky closed his eyes, feeling the warmth of the sun on his face and the gentle breeze rustling the leaves. For a moment, he felt a semblance of normalcy, a fleeting illusion of freedom.

Klaus watched Bucky, his heart swelling with a mixture of love and possessiveness. He reached out, running his fingers through Bucky’s hair, feeling the soft strands slip through his fingers. Bucky sighed contentedly, leaning into the touch. The simple gesture was welcomed, and Bucky let out a rare puff of pure joy.

“Thank you, Klaus,” Bucky whispered, his voice filled with genuine gratitude. “This means more to me than you can imagine.”

Klaus’s eyes softened, his fingers trailing down to cup Bucky’s cheek. “I just want you to be happy, my boy. You’re everything to me.”

Bucky opened his eyes, meeting Klaus’s intense gaze. He saw the truth in those eyes—the depth of Klaus’s feelings, the darkness that lingered just beneath the surface. Despite everything, he couldn’t help but feel a twisted sense of comfort—a perverse reassurance in Klaus’s

possessive love.

As the sun shone down on them, casting long shadows across the garden through the trees, Klaus pulled Bucky closer, holding him tightly. The world outside was a dangerous place, filled with threats and uncertainties. But here, in this moment, with Bucky in his arms, Klaus felt a fleeting sense of peace.

For Bucky, the garden was a brief escape, a reminder of the world beyond the estate walls. But it was also a reminder of his captivity and of the world that he'd left behind with the invisible chains that bound him to Klaus. He leant into Klaus's arms, his heart a confusing mix of gratitude and longing for true freedom.

As they made their way back to the estate, the sky was so vibrant. He wished to be up in the sky again, soaring through the clouds, but that was never going to happen again, and that was something he didn't know how to deal with yet, so he pushed it to the back of his mind.

Bucky cast one last, longing glance at the sky and the garden. He would keep this memory and cherish it as a beacon of hope in the darkness. Just as he turned his head, he thought he saw a flash of movement within the tree line. He froze, staring intently at the spot where he thought he saw something, but the foliage remained still.

A shiver ran down his spine, and a sense of unease began to creep into his bones. Feeling unnerved, he moved closer to Klaus, seeking the security that his presence brought.

Klaus, sensing Bucky's thoughts and sudden tension, squeezed his hand gently and pulled him closer. "We'll do this again, Bucky. I promise."

Bucky nodded, a small smile playing on his lips despite the lingering sense of unease. "I'd like that."

As they stepped back inside, the warmth of the house enveloped them, and Klaus's protective presence surrounded Bucky like a shield. The moment of freedom was over, but the memory was permanent, a glimmer of light in the shadows.

Bucky felt a renewed sense of determination and hope for the future. He would cherish these moments and hold onto them tightly. And maybe, just maybe, he would find a way to navigate the labyrinth of his emotions, to find a balance between the love he felt for Klaus and the longing for true freedom.

Once inside, Klaus closed the door behind them, the heavy wooden door shutting out the world beyond with a clunk and click of the locks sliding back into place. Bucky couldn't shake the feeling that someone or something had been watching him from the treeline, and he felt the thrumming of fear in his veins. What if it was someone coming to hurt him again? He glanced back at the door, his heart beating a little faster, but Klaus's hand on his shoulder brought him back to the present.

"Let's get you something warm to drink," Klaus suggested, guiding Bucky towards the kitchen. "You did well today."

Bucky followed, the unease slowly dissipating with Klaus's comforting words. The warmth of the house and the promise of hot tea helped ground him, yet the image of the movement in the treeline lingered in the back of his mind.

As they sat in the kitchen, the comforting aroma of tea filling the air, Bucky tried to push away the nagging thought of what he might have seen. Klaus chatted softly, his tone soothing and familiar, drawing Bucky back into the cocoon of their shared space.

"Thank you, Klaus," Bucky said softly, lifting his cup to his lips. "For today. It meant a lot to me."

Klaus smiled, a genuine warmth in his eyes. "I want you to be happy, flower. You deserve it."

Bucky's heart swelled with conflicting emotions. He knew Klaus's love was possessive and controlling and, more often than not, dangerous and toxic, yet there were moments like this when he could almost believe it was genuine and let himself get wrapped up in it. He held onto the memory of the garden, the feel of the sun on his skin and the grass beneath his feet and fingers, and the brief glimpse of freedom as a precious treasure.

That night, as Bucky lay in bed, he couldn't help but replay the day's events in his mind. The joy of being outside, the eerie feeling of being watched, and Klaus's protective presence beside him. He turned to look at Klaus, who was already asleep beside him, his breathing even and calm.

Bucky reached out, brushing his fingers lightly over Klaus's hand, a gesture of silent thanks and a plea for understanding. He closed his eyes, allowing himself to drift into sleep with a small, fragile hope that tomorrow might bring another moment of freedom, another

chance to see the true Klaus, and another step towards finding himself again.

Chapter 26: The Calm Before the Storm

The early light filtered through the forest canopy, casting intricate shadows on the men below. Buck, Demarco, Crank, and Brady moved with purpose, silently weaving through the trees with their rifles at the ready.

Beside them, Yuri and his team advanced with ghost-like precision, their knowledge of the terrain evident in every step. Unlike Buck and his men, Yuri's team had spent countless months navigating this ground. The shared mission had forged a strong bond between the two groups, providing a comforting sense of camaraderie.

Buck glanced at his men, the tension in their shoulders and their expressions sombre but determined. The task ahead was perilous, but they were ready. He motioned for a halt, signalling for the group to gather for a final briefing before they made their move on the estate.

"We're deep in enemy territory now," Buck whispered, his voice low but firm. "No mistakes. We move quietly and swiftly. Remember, any noise could alert Klaus, and he'll take Bucky and run again. And then we lose them both."

Crank nodded, his grip tightening on his shoulder strap. "Got it, Buck. We'll stay silent."

Demarco adjusted his gear, his eyes scanning the surroundings. "We've been over the plan a dozen times, but one more won't hurt."

Buck crouched down, drawing a rough map in the dirt. "Alright, listen up. We'll approach the estate from the east, using the cover of the trees. Crank and Demarco will take out the guards at the side entrance. Brady and I will go around the back. Yuri, I need you and the boys to make sure we aren't getting any extra visitors. We get Bucky, take out General Klaus, and get out. Fast and silent."

Yuri nodded, his face smeared with dirt and his eyes sharp with focus, leaning in. "We'll cover your flanks and provide backup if needed," he said in heavily accented English. "But our primary goal is to stay unseen."

Buck nodded in agreement. "Thanks, Yuri. Your team's support is crucial. Let's keep chatter to a minimum from here on."

As they resumed their journey, the forest seemed to close in around them, the shadows deepening as the sun climbed higher. The silence was oppressive, broken only by the occasional rustle of leaves or the distant call of a bird. They knew that the slightest noise could betray their position to the enemy.

Despite the mission's critical nature, Buck's thoughts constantly drifted to Bucky. The emotional weight of the last few months was almost unbearable now that it was finally coming to a head—a vicious storm within him was brewing. Each step he took in the silence of the forest was a harsh reminder of the distance separating him from Bucky still. The tension thrumming through his body wasn't just from the mission's danger—it stemmed from the gnawing ache of missing the man he loved.

Every fibre of Buck's being longed to see Bucky again, to hold him tightly and never let go. The memory of Bucky's touch, the scent of his hair, and the warmth of his embrace haunted Buck, driving him forward with an unbridled wildfire force of determination.

He ached to breathe him in, to kiss him deeply, and to tell him how much he loved him and how important he was to Buck. The thought of their reunion, of finally holding him without a damn fence and the threats hovering over them, was the only thing that kept him grounded amidst the chaos of his mind and the war around them.

Buck's resolve was unwavering, but his heart ached with a profound longing. He couldn't shake the image of Bucky's smile meant only for him, the sound of his laugh, and the way his eyes sparkled when they were together. These memories fueled him to succeed, to survive, and to bring Bucky home. He pressed on, driven by the hope of seeing Bucky again and holding him close, whispering words of love that had gone unspoken for far too long.

He glanced at Brady, who had grounded him when it felt like the world was slipping away, offering support and strength that Buck couldn't have survived without. In those darkest moments, Brady had been his anchor, pulling him back from the edge.

"Brady, are you ready for this?" Buck asked quietly, his voice steady despite the emotions and nerves wracking through his body.

Brady met his gaze with a strong gaze, the fire burning within. "Absolutely. We're bringing Bucky back, no matter what."

Demarco, ever the joker, couldn't resist a quip, even in their dire

situation. "Just remember, Brady—if you see me run, you better keep up."

The group chuckled softly, the brief moment of levity easing the tension that hung thick in the air. Each of them carried their own burdens and their own fears, but they were united by a common goal, which was to bring their man back home.

As they moved through the forest, the silence was occasionally broken by the rustle of leaves or the distant call of a bird. The environment felt both like a sanctuary and a nightmare, with the thick foliage closing in around them, tripping one of them occasionally.

Buck's mind wandered to the future, to the moment when he would finally see Bucky again. He imagined the feel of Bucky's arms around him, the warmth of his embrace, and the joy of their reunion. These thoughts were a light in the darkness, guiding him through the uncertainty and fear of it all.

The mission was critical, and failure was not an option. But more than that, it was personal. Buck would traverse any distance and face any danger to bring Bucky back. His love for Bucky was his strength and his guiding star, and he would not rest until they were together again.

Yuri gestured for them to halt, his eyes narrowing as he scanned the path ahead. "Enemy patrol up ahead," he whispered, his voice barely audible. "We need to take them out silently."

Buck signalled for his team to spread out with a flick of his wrist, and their movements were swift and quiet. They melted into the underbrush, their forms blending seamlessly with the surrounding foliage as they lay in wait.

The German patrol, oblivious to the danger lurking nearby, continued their march. Buck’s heart pounded as he positioned himself behind a tree, his hand hovering over the handle of his knife. He exchanged a glance with Crank, who was similarly poised to strike.

On Buck’s signal, they moved as one. Buck crept up behind the nearest soldier, covering the man’s mouth with one hand and driving his knife into his throat with the other. The soldier gurgled, his body going limp as Buck eased him to the ground.

Simultaneously, Crank, Demarco, Brady, and Yuri's team dispatched the other soldiers, their knives finding their marks with lethal precision. The Germans fell silently, their bodies crumpling to the

forest floor.

But in the chaos of the close-quarters combat, one of the German soldiers managed to evade Demarco's initial strike. The soldier lunged at Buck, his knife aimed at him. Buck tried to dodge, but the blade caught him, slicing into his flesh with a searing pain.

"Ah!" Buck gasped, the sharp sting of the knife sending a jolt of pain through his body. He instinctively grabbed the soldier's wrist, trying to keep the blade from going deeper.

The German soldier was relentless, his eyes wild with desperation as he pushed against Buck. The two men grappled, their movements a deadly dance of survival. Buck's strength began to wane, the pain in his side sapping his energy.

The soldier snarled, driving his weight against Buck. The knife inched deeper, and the tip sank deeper into his side. Buck's vision blurred, a cold sweat breaking out across his forehead. He gritted his teeth, using every ounce of strength to keep the blade at bay.

"Crank!" Buck choked out, his voice strained with the effort. "I need... help!"

Crank, having just dispatched his own opponent, turned to see Buck struggling. His eyes widened in horror as he saw the German soldier gaining the upper hand. Without hesitation, Crank lunged forward, his knife poised for a fatal strike.

The German soldier sensed the movement too late. Crank's knife plunged into the man's neck, the force of the blow driving him back. The soldier's grip on the knife slackened, and he collapsed to the ground, blood spurting from the wound.

Buck fell to his knees, his hand pressed to his side. Blood seeped through his fingers, and he felt a wave of dizziness wash over him.

The wound wasn't too deep, but the pain was intense.

Demarco and Brady rushed to his side, their faces pale with worry. "Buck, are you okay?" Brady asked urgently, his eyes wide with concern.

"I'm fine," Buck gritted out through his teeth, his voice strained. "It's just a scratch. We need to keep moving."

Demarco handed Buck a piece of cloth to press against the wound. "Here, use this. We can't afford to slow down now."

Buck nodded, accepting the cloth and pressing it to his side. The pain was a constant, throbbing reminder of their precarious situation, but he pushed it aside. They had a mission to complete.

Each breath sent a wave of pain radiating from his side, the cloth quickly soaking through with blood. Buck's vision blurred slightly, but he blinked it away, forcing himself to focus. He had to stay strong, for Bucky's sake and for the team.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Brady asked, his voice tinged with concern.

Buck managed a tight smile, though the effort made his side ache more. "I've had worse. We need to get to Bucky. Let's move."

Crank looked unconvinced but nodded. "Alright, but if you start slowing down, you let us know."

They moved forward, each step agitating the knife wound in Buck's side. He gritted his teeth against the pain, forcing himself to put one foot in front of the other. The mission was too important. Bucky was too important to let a shallow wound stop him.

"Let's keep moving," Buck urged, leading the way deeper into the estate.

Buck took a deep breath, wincing as pain shot through his side. He forced himself to focus, his thoughts zeroing in on the mission ahead. Bucky was out there, somewhere in the estate, and Buck would not stop until he had his boyfriend back safe in his arms.

As they pressed on through the forest, the terrain became more challenging. The underbrush was thicker, the ground uneven, and littered with roots that threatened to trip them up with every step. Buck's injury was a constant, throbbing reminder of the close call, but he pushed the pain aside, concentrating on putting one foot in front of the other.

Demarco glanced back at Buck, his concern evident. "Buck, if you need to slow down, just say so."

"I'm fine," Buck insisted, his voice tight with determination. "We can't afford to lose any time. Bucky's counting on us."

Crank gave him a sceptical look but nodded. "Alright, but if you start lagging, we're carrying you. No arguments."

Buck managed a faint smile despite the pain. "Deal."

The Russian squad moved ahead, scouting the path and ensuring it was clear. Yuri turned back and gave Buck a nod of respect as they continued. "You're strong, Major. We'll get your buddy back."

Buck nodded back at him in respect, his face hardening. He appreciated the support, but his mind was consumed with thoughts of Bucky. The memories of their time together, the laughter, the quiet moments, and the love they shared fueled him, and nothing was going to stop him. He would not let anything stand in his way.

The forest gradually thinned, and they found themselves approaching the estate's perimeter. The grand structure loomed ahead, its stone walls partially obscured by the surrounding trees. The air was thick with tension, and each member of the team was acutely aware of the dangers that lay ahead.

Buck signalled for the team to halt and crouched behind a fallen log, taking a moment to catch his breath. The pain in his side was a relentless, burning ache, but he pressed the cloth harder against the wound, determined to keep going. He couldn't afford to let the pain slow him down.

Demarco handed Buck a small canteen of water. "Here, drink. You need to stay hydrated."

Buck accepted the canteen gratefully, taking a few sips. The water was cool and refreshing, momentarily easing the dryness in his throat. "Thanks," he murmured, handing it back.

"Remember the plan," Buck said, his voice steady despite the pain. "Crank and Demarco will take out the guards at the side entrance. Brady and I will go around the back. Once we're in, we regroup and head to the main building. We get Bucky and get out. Fast and silent to not draw any other possible patrols in on us."

The team nodded, their expressions grim and focused. They moved into position, using the cover of the trees to approach the estate. Buck's heart pounded as they neared the front gate. The pain in his side was a constant distraction, but he forced himself to concentrate on the task at hand.

As they neared the estate, Yuri signalled for his men to fall back slightly, keeping the rear clear and ensuring no one would sneak up on Buck's team from behind. The Russians melted into the shadows, their presence a silent reassurance as Buck and his men pressed on.

"We'll cover your exit," Yuri whispered to Buck. "Get your man and get out. We'll handle anyone who tries to follow."

"Thank you, Yuri," Buck replied, appreciating the invaluable support.

As they reached the edge of the forest, they ducked down, using the thick underbrush as cover. The estate loomed ahead, its grand facade imposing and foreboding. The first light of dawn cast a soft glow over the grounds, illuminating the dewdrops that clung to the grass and leaves.

Buck scanned the area, expecting to see guards patrolling the perimeter, but to his surprise, the estate seemed eerily quiet. The usual signs of activity were absent, and there were no guards in sight.

"Do you see any guards?" Brady whispered, his voice tense with anticipation.

Buck shook his head, his eyes narrowing as he surveyed the estate. "No, it's too quiet. Stay alert."

Crank and Demarco crept closer, their movements slow and cautious. They too noticed the unusual silence, their expressions mirroring Buck's concern.

"It's like a ghost town," Crank murmured, his grip tightening on his knife and rifle. "Something's not right."

Buck's mind raced with possibilities. The silence could be a trap, or it could mean that Klaus had taken Bucky and fled. Either way, they had to proceed with caution.

The team moved forward, their steps barely making a sound on the damp grass and leaves. They reached the estate's outer wall and pressed against it, using the stone structure as cover. Buck signalled for Crank and Demarco to check the side entrance while he and Brady advanced towards the back of the estate.

As they approached the back of the estate, Buck's heart pounded in his chest. The pain in his side was a constant, throbbing reminder of their precarious situation and of the danger ahead, but he pushed it aside,

focusing on the now.

The morning sun cast a golden glow over the estate's sprawling yard. Buck crouched behind a thick hedge, and his breath caught in his throat as he peered through the foliage. Beside him, Brady was equally tense, every muscle coiled with readiness. They had been tracking General Klaus for days, trying to pinpoint Bucky's location, and now, finally, they had found him.

Buck crouched at the edge of the forest, the dense foliage providing a perfect cover as he peered into the secluded garden. The distance obscured the details, but he could clearly make out the figures of Bucky and General Klaus. His vantage point allowed him to observe their interactions without being seen, and what he saw filled him with a tumult of emotions.

From his hidden spot, Buck watched as Bucky sank onto the grass, his posture relaxed but with a hint of weariness. The way Bucky leant back, staring up at the sky, and the small movements of his fingers threading through the grass suggested a rare moment of peace. Buck could almost feel the warmth of the sun on Bucky's face and the gentle breeze rustling the leaves, even from his distant position. It was a scene of tranquility, an illusion of freedom that contrasted sharply with the reality of their situation.

General Klaus's presence was unmistakable—a dark silhouette against the bright backdrop of the garden. He sat close to Bucky, his body language protective, almost possessive. Buck couldn't hear their words, but the gestures spoke volumes. Klaus ran his fingers through Bucky's hair with a tenderness that seemed out of place, given the circumstances. Bucky's reaction—a contented sigh, a rare smile—was bittersweet for Buck to witness. It was a moment of genuine affection, yet it underscored the twisted dynamics at play.

Buck's gaze angrily followed Klaus's hand as it trailed down to cup Bucky's cheek. The intensity in Klaus's eyes, even from a distance, was palpable. Buck felt a pang of helplessness mixing with the burning anger. He could see the bruises littering his boyfriend's face from here, the black, purple, and blue hues painting his beautiful face. He was going to kill Klaus, and he was going to enjoy every moment.

The sun cast long shadows across the garden, the golden light creating an almost idyllic scene. Klaus pulled Bucky closer, holding him tightly, and for a moment, they seemed like any other couple finding solace in each other's arms. But Buck knew better. He knew the underlying

darkness and possessiveness that defined Klaus's love for Bucky. He'd heard the poisonous words tumble out of the man's mouth about Bucky all those months ago.

From his hidden vantage point, Buck saw not just a fleeting moment of peace but a violent reminder of the invisible chains binding Bucky. The garden, a temporary escape, highlighted the cruel difference between the semblance of freedom and the reality of the prison. Buck felt a surge of determination. He couldn't let Bucky remain trapped in this twisted semblance of normalcy. He had to find a way to break those chains, bring his man home, and remind him what true freedom actually was.

As Klaus helped Bucky to his feet, Buck felt a surge of anger and protectiveness. He wanted to run to Bucky to tear him away from the General and remind him who he really was. Bucky was staring up at the sky now, and before he could act, Brady's hand shot out, gripping his arm tightly and pulling him back down into the cover of the hedge.

"Stay down," Brady hissed, his voice barely more than a whisper. "They'll see us."

Buck bit back a retort, knowing Brady was right. They had to be cautious and smart if they were going to get Bucky out of there alive. He settled back into the shadows, his eyes never leaving Bucky's form.

Buck watched as Bucky scanned the yard, his gaze sweeping over the manicured lawns and blooming flowerbeds. For a moment, his eyes seemed to lock onto the very spot where Buck and Brady were hiding. Buck's breath hitched, his heart pounding in his chest. Did he see us? he wondered, panic and hope warring within him.

But then Klaus reached out, brushing his fingers gently against Bucky's cheek. Bucky's attention shifted back to Klaus, his expression softening once more. Klaus said something that Buck couldn't hear, and Bucky nodded, leaning into Klaus's touch.

Together, they walked back towards the estate, their steps slow and unhurried. Buck watched as the large door swung closed behind them. With a heavy thud, the yard was silent once more. The dark interior of the house having swallowed them whole.

Buck's mind was a whirlwind of emotions. He felt a pang of loss,

seeing Bucky so seemingly content in Klaus's presence, and an equal measure of determination to bring him back. Bucky was clearly under Klaus's spell, a prisoner not just in body but in mind as well.

"We need to move," Brady said, his voice breaking through Buck's tumultuous thoughts. "We can't afford to be seen."

Buck nodded, his jaw set with grim resolve. "We'll get him back," he vowed, his voice low and fierce. "Whatever it takes."

As they slipped away from the estate to update the rest of the team, Buck cast one last glance over his shoulder. The image of Bucky smiling up at Klaus was seared into his mind, a haunting reminder of how far they had to go, even after he brings Bucky back home. But he wouldn't give up. He couldn't. Bucky was counting on him.

Chapter 27: The Reckoning



Bucky sat in the library, a book open on his lap, but his eyes were fixed on the window overlooking the darkening forest at the edge of the estate. The fading sunlight filtered through the glass, casting shadows on the polished wooden floor, doing little to ease the tension knotting in his chest. He turned a page absently, the words slipping past him unnoticed as his mind raced with thoughts of what he had seen earlier.

Movement. At the forest's edge. It had been quick, almost

imperceptible, but enough to set his nerves on edge. He couldn't shake the image from his mind. Klaus was somewhere in the house, likely attending to one of his many tasks, but Bucky felt restless, bored, and, above all, anxious and paranoid.

Klaus had saved him once and killed the men who had tried to rape and kill him. But what if they had friends? What if they were coming to finish the job? The thought ate at him, making it impossible for him to focus on the book in his hands. He glanced again towards the window, half-expecting to see faces peering out from the trees.

The library, usually a safe place that supplied him comfort, now felt suffocating. The tall shelves lined with books seemed to close in around him, becoming suffocating. Bucky stood, unable to sit still any longer, and paced the length of the room anxiously.

Every creak of the house and every rustle of the leaves outside sent his heart racing. His paranoia grew with each passing minute. He checked the window again, squinting into the shadows of the forest, convinced he saw movement. But each time he looked, the figures dissolved into the fading sunlight and swaying branches.

He tried to read, tried to focus on the words, but his eyes kept darting back to the window. His mind began playing tricks on him, conjuring images of shadowy figures lurking just out of sight. He imagined faces peering from the trees, eyes watching him, waiting for the perfect moment to strike. His breath quickened, his palms grew sweaty, and his heart pounded in his chest.

"Bucky," he whispered to himself, trying to break the cycle of fear. "Get a grip."

But the fear was only growing. He felt trapped, like a cornered animal with nowhere to go, every instinct screaming at him to run, to hide. Yet he knew there was nowhere to go. The walls of the estate were supposed to be his sanctuary, but in these moments, it had never felt more like a cage.

His thoughts spiralled, memories of the attack flooding his mind. The harsh and hungry faces, the mocking laughter, and the excruciating pain of the bullet hitting its mark. He could still feel their hands on him, groping and squeezing in their cruelty. He shuddered, wrapping his arms around himself as if to ward off the ghosts of his past. The trauma clung to him and followed him, a dark shadow that he couldn't escape, no matter how hard he tried.

Bucky's mind wandered back to the horrors he had endured before reaching Stalag Luft. The parachute descent, the heart-pounding jump from the plane into the unknown. He remembered hitting the ground hard, rolling to his feet, and immediately running—the forest was his only hope for cover. He ran with every ounce of strength he had, adrenaline coursing through his veins.

He remembered rubbing and hiding like a rat in German territory for days, stealing cabbages and whatever else he could find on neighbouring farms.

He remembered the German kids who had spotted him, their screams piercing the air, alerting everyone around. The terror of being hunted, the frantic sprint through the trees, the sound of branches snapping and leaves rustling underfoot. His heart had pounded in his chest, fear pushing him to keep moving.

Then there was the moment he was captured, pulled from the water with a gun pointed at his head.

He had been dragged through a hostile town, his fellow soldiers being slaughtered by civilians right before his eyes. The hatred and violence were unlike anything he'd ever witnessed, each moment a fight for survival. He had almost been killed himself, the brutality of it all searing into his memory as fresh as the day it had happened.

Waking up on the back of a trailer, surrounded by the bodies of his comrades, the soldier was praying and clutching a crucifix. He could still see the terror in the man's eyes and in his voice before he was brutally killed with a shovel, the blood splattering onto Bucky's face. He had run again, through the forest, running for his life, the fear and utter desperation driving him forward until he was captured once more.

The forest was a place of nightmares for Bucky. It held the memories of his darkest moments. The place where he had been most vulnerable and most afraid. The shadows of the trees seemed to hold the echoes of his past, taunting whispers of the horrors he had endured.

As if sensing his distress, Klaus appeared in the doorway, his expression unreadable. The moment Bucky saw him, he felt an overwhelming surge of relief.

Without thinking, he rushed to Klaus, collapsing against his chest. Klaus's strong arms wrapped around him instinctively, holding him tight. Bucky buried his face in Klaus's chest, feeling the steady rise and

fall of his breathing, the familiar scent grounding him.

"Klaus," Bucky murmured, his voice muffled by Klaus's shirt. "I just need to be close to you right now."

Klaus's hand moved soothingly over Bucky's back. "Schatz," he said softly, his voice a low, steady rumble that always seemed to calm Bucky's nerves when it wasn't the source of them. "You seem troubled."

Bucky clung tighter, unwilling to let go. "I'm just antsy," he lied, not wanting to reveal his fears. He couldn't completely trust his mind enough to lose the opportunity of going outside on a whim. "I just... I need you. I feel better when you're near."

Klaus's grip tightened slightly, his hand continuing its soothing motion. "It's okay," he murmured. "I'm here."

Bucky's grip on Klaus was desperate, his fingers digging into Klaus's shirt as if letting go would mean being swept away by his fears and the memories. The psychological hold Klaus had over him was profound in its ability. Klaus was his protector, his saviour, and, in many ways, his captor and abuser. The bond between them was a twisted mix of gratitude, dependency, and a need for validation that Bucky couldn't untangle.

Klaus's presence was a double-edged sword. It calmed Bucky and made him feel safe, but it also reminded him of his vulnerability and mortality. Klaus had seen him at his weakest, had been the one to rescue him and put him in his most vulnerable moments, and now Bucky couldn't imagine life without him. The thought of losing Klaus was unbearable, a fear that rivalled even the terror of his past traumas that had been inflicted on him since the start of this damn war.

"I'm here, my little flower," Klaus repeated, his voice a soothing balm to Bucky's frayed nerves. "You don't have to worry. I'll always be here, Schatz."

Bucky looked up, his eyes wide and pleading. "Promise me, Klaus. Promise me you'll always be here. That you won't leave me."

Klaus's gaze softened, and he nodded. "I promise, flower. I'm not going anywhere."

The words were a lifeline, something solid to cling to in the maelstrom of his emotions. Bucky pressed closer, needing the physical

reassurance, needing to feel Klaus's heartbeat against his own. It was the only thing that could drown out the creeping paranoia and whispers.

"Thank you," Bucky whispered, his voice barely audible. "I don't know what I'd do without you."

Klaus's arms tightened around him, his touch firm and reassuring. "You don't have to think about that. Just focus on now. Focus on us."

For a moment, they stood in silence, the weight of unspoken words hanging between them. Bucky felt a flicker of hope, a small spark of strength ignited by Klaus's presence. He wasn't alone in this fight. As long as Klaus was by his side, he believed they could overcome anything.

Klaus finally pulled back slightly, looking at Bucky with concern. “Come with me,” he said gently. He guided Bucky to the bathroom, sitting him on the cushioned bench by the wall. “I’m going to run you a bath.”

Bucky nodded, still feeling the remnants of his fears clinging to him. He sat on the edge of the bench, his fingers nervously fiddling with each other and his eyes flickering around the room. The sound of the water filling the tub was a soothing background noise, but it wasn’t enough to fully calm Bucky’s nerves. He kept glancing at the door and at the shadows, half-expecting something to jump out at him.

Klaus finished preparing the bath and then walked over to Bucky, stepping in between his legs and crouching down to be at eye level. “My Schatz,” he murmured, his voice gentle. He placed his hands on Bucky’s face, swiping his thumb over Bucky’s lips and tugging his lower lip down slightly. Bucky’s eyes finally focused, locking onto Klaus’s intense gaze.

Klaus took a moment to admire him. Bucky, with his chiselled features and striking good looks, was a picture of both strength and vulnerability. His sharp jawline, high cheekbones, and piercing blue eyes, framed by dark, tousled hair, made him look like he had stepped out of a classic painting. Despite the fear in his eyes, there was an undeniable beauty to him that Klaus found captivating, and it all belonged to him.

Bucky leant into Klaus’s touch, seeking the comfort that only Klaus could provide. The touch of Klaus’s thumb on his lips and the firm hold on his face all served to ground him in the present. With Klaus’s

attention on him, he felt a small measure of safety, a belief that no one could hurt him as long as Klaus was there by his side.

“I’ve got you,” Klaus whispered, his voice a soothing balm. “No one can hurt you while I’m here.” And Klaus had no idea how much Bucky needed to hear that right now.

Bucky closed his eyes for a moment, allowing himself to take a deep breath and absorb Klaus’s words. The tension in his body eased slightly, his fingers stopped their nervous movements, and he leant further into Klaus’s touch.

Klaus continued to hold him, his thumb gently caressing Bucky’s lip before moving to brush a stray lock of hair away from his forehead. “You’re safe with me,” he reiterated, his gaze never leaving his boy’s face. “You’re always safe with me.”

Bucky opened his eyes, looking at Klaus with a mixture of gratitude and desperation. “I need you, Klaus. I need you to make it all go away.”

Klaus nodded, understanding the depth of Bucky’s need for reassurance. “Let’s get you into the bath. It will help you relax.”

He helped Bucky to his feet, guiding him over to the tub. Bucky undressed slowly, his movements were still shaky. Klaus remained close, his presence a constant source of support and warmth. Once Bucky was in the warm water, he seemed to relax further, the heat helping to soothe his frayed nerves.

Klaus knelt by the side of the tub, his hand resting on his boy’s bruised shoulder. “Just focus on the warmth,” he said softly. “I’m right here.”

The warm water enveloped Bucky, its heat seeping into his muscles and providing a semblance of comfort. As Bucky settled into the bath, the immediate panic began to ebb, replaced by a deep, lingering unease that Klaus sought to soothe.

Klaus dipped a soft cloth into the water and gently began to wash Bucky’s arms. His movements were slow and deliberate, each stroke designed to relax and reassure. “Let the water wash away whatever it is that’s troubling you, my boy,” Klaus murmured, his voice a low, soothing rumble.

Bucky closed his eyes, trying to focus on the warmth and Klaus’s touch. He wanted to believe that he could let go, that he could feel

safe. But the memories of the horrors he had endured clung to him like a dark shadow, unwilling to leave him.

Klaus moved the cloth over Bucky's shoulders, then down his back, his touch firm yet gentle. "You've been through so much, my flower," he said softly. "But you're safe now. I'm here to protect you."

Bucky nodded slightly, the tension in his body easing minutely. "I know," he whispered. "It's just... hard to forget."

"You don't have to forget," Klaus replied, his tone soothing yet insistent. "You just have to trust me. Trust that I will keep you safe, no matter what. I protect what's mine."

Bucky opened his eyes, looking up at Klaus with a mixture of gratitude and desperation. "I do trust you, Klaus. You've always been there for me."

Klaus's hand moved to Bucky's face, gently cupping his cheek. "And I always will be," he said firmly. "You're mine to protect, mine to care for."

There was a possessive edge to Klaus's words, a subtle reminder of the control he held over Bucky. But in his vulnerable state, Bucky found comfort in Klaus's dominance, in the certainty of his protection.

Klaus's hand moved from Bucky's cheek to his hair, gently washing it, his fingers massaging Bucky's scalp. "You're safe here," he repeated, his voice a hypnotic murmur. "With me, you're always safe."

Bucky leant into Klaus's touch, the repetitive motion lulling him into a state of near-trance. The warmth of the water, combined with Klaus's steady presence, began to dull the sharp edges of his fear.

"I've seen the worst of humanity," Klaus continued, his tone turning darker. "I know what people are capable of. And so do you. But I won't let anyone hurt you again. You're too precious to me."

Bucky's eyes fluttered open, meeting Klaus's intense gaze. "Thank you, Klaus. I... I don't know what I'd do without you."

Klaus's lips curled into a small, satisfied smile. "You'll never have to find out," he said softly. "As long as you're with me, you'll always be protected."

The bathwater sloshed gently as Klaus moved the cloth over Bucky's

chest, then down his abdomen, his touch careful and calming. Each stroke of the cloth seemed to help reinforce Klaus's words, sinking deeper into Bucky's psyche.

"You're mine, Bucky," Klaus whispered, his voice low and intimate. "I'd do anything for you, my beautiful boy."

Bucky nodded, the words resonating deeply within him. There was a twisted comfort in Klaus's possessiveness, a dark reassurance that he clung to in his moments of fear. "I'm yours," he whispered back, the declaration feeling both a comfort and a surrender, but none of that mattered to him anymore.

This was his world. This was all he knew.

Klaus's eyes gleamed with satisfaction. "Yes, you are. And that will never change. I'll always be apart of you. You wear my brand, and I'm inside your every waking thought, my darling. You are mine completely, my love."

As Klaus continued to wash him, Bucky felt his remaining resistance melt away. The memories of the forest and the terror of being hunted and captured began to fade into the background. In their place, a new reality took hold—one where Klaus was his protector, his anchor, the one person who could keep the darkness at bay.

"Tell me, Schatz," Klaus said softly, his hands never stopping their gentle motion. "What are your darkest fears? What haunts you the most?"

Bucky hesitated, the question stirring up the very memories he tried to bury. But Klaus's touch was soothing, his voice a balm to Bucky's frayed nerves, almost hypnotic. "I... I fear the forest," he began haltingly. "I fear being hunted again and being captured. The faces, the laughter, the pain, and the hands...."

Klaus nodded, encouraging him to continue. "What else, flower? What else keeps you awake at night?"

Bucky took a shuddering breath. "I fear the dark and the silence. I fear being alone, left with my thoughts. The memories of the attack, the brutality, and the cruelty... It's like they're always there, waiting for me to close my eyes so they can finish the job."

Klaus's hands moved to Bucky's shoulders, his touch firm and grounding. "You don't have to be alone, my boy," he said softly. "You have me. I'll always be here for you. I'll never leave you to face those fears by yourself."

Bucky looked up at Klaus, his eyes wide and vulnerable. "You promise?"

"I promise," Klaus said firmly. "You're mine to protect and mine to care for. I won't let anything happen to you."

The bathwater sloshed as Klaus leant closer, his face inches from Bucky's. "Your fears, your nightmares—they're mine now. I'll carry them for you. You just need to trust me and let me in."

Bucky nodded, feeling a sense of relief wash over him. "I trust you, Klaus. I need you."

Klaus's lips curled into a satisfied smile. "And I need you, Bucky. You're mine, and I love you."

Klaus's words, combined with his soothing touch, began to work their way deeper into Bucky's mind. The fear and anxiety that had gripped him started to loosen it's hold, replaced by a sense of security in Klaus's presence. Bucky leant into Klaus's touch, seeking the comfort and reassurance he so desperately needed.

"But there's more," Bucky admitted, his voice trembling. "I'm scared of being forgotten, of being alone and left by myself. I fear that no one will miss me or care to remember me."

Klaus's eyes softened as he took in Bucky's words. "Oh, my flower," he murmured, his tone both soothing and insidious. "You will never be forgotten. You are too important and too precious. I will always remember you. I will always be here for you. You'll never be far from my side."

Klaus's hand moved to cup Bucky's cheek again, his thumb stroking gently across his skin and capturing the tear that slipped down his cheek. "You are mine, Bucky. And as long as you are with me, you will never be alone. You will always have someone who cares for you and cherishes you. Who loves you so deeply."

Bucky felt a wave of emotion crash over him, a mixture of relief and resignation at the words. "I don't want to be alone," he whispered, leaning into Klaus's touch.

“You won’t be,” Klaus promised, his voice a hypnotic lull. “I will always be here for you. I will never leave you. You are mine, and I will always take care of you.”

The words sank deep into Bucky’s mind, the fear of being forgotten and alone slowly dissipating under the weight of Klaus’s assurances. In Klaus’s presence, he felt a sense of belonging—a dark comfort that he couldn’t and wouldn’t find anywhere else.

The warm bathwater had washed away some of Bucky’s fears, but Klaus’s presence and touch had done more to soothe his frayed nerves. As Klaus finished bathing him, he gently lifted Bucky out of the tub, wrapping him in a plush towel and drying him off with careful, deliberate strokes.

Klaus then dressed Bucky in his own clothes, the loose fabric hanging off Bucky’s lean frame. The sun had gone down, casting the room in the soft glow of twilight. Klaus led Bucky to the bed, sitting down first before pulling his boy down onto his lap. Bucky’s ass rested on Klaus’s thighs, and his hands found their place on his boy’s waist, pulling him in tighter.

Bucky gripped Klaus’s shirt in his fists above the waistband, dragging his hands up Klaus’s chest until they settled over Klaus’s heart. He let his forehead thump against Klaus’s shoulder and took a deep, steadying breath. Klaus’s hands roamed over his body, providing a sense of comfort and security that Bucky desperately needed.

"You scare me, Klaus," Bucky admitted quietly in the silent room.

Klaus paused his movements, his fingers tightening around Bucky's thighs. "Why, Schatz?" he asked softly, his voice curious and humorous.

Bucky took another deep breath, his voice trembling as he continued. "You scare me because I don't know how to live without you now. I don't remember what it's like to think for myself anymore. You scare me because I'm scared to lose you. And I don't know how to deal with that."

Klaus’s fingers tightened slightly, a subtle reminder of his control. “You don’t have to be scared, Bucky,” he murmured. “I’m here. I’ll always be here.”

Bucky shook his head slightly, his forehead still resting on Klaus’s shoulder. “You scare me because of how much I need you. You’ve

become everything to me, Klaus. I can't make a decision without wondering what you'd think. I can't sleep without feeling your presence nearby. It's like you're in my head all the time."

Klaus's grip on Bucky's waist tightened, his hands moving up to rub soothing circles on Bucky's back and over the mark that showed who the boy belonged to. "That's because you're mine, my boy. And I take care of what's mine. You don't have to think for yourself anymore. I'll do that for you."

Bucky felt a shiver run down his spine at Klaus's words—a mix of fear and comfort. "But that's what scares me," he whispered. "I've forgotten who I am without you. I'm scared of what I've become."

Klaus's hands continued their gentle, possessive movements. "You've become mine, Bucky. That's all you need to be. As long as you're with me, you're safe. You don't need to worry about anything else."

Bucky's hands clung to Klaus's shirt, his fingers curling into the fabric as he absorbed Klaus's words. "You scare me because... because I know I'd do anything for you. Even if it's wrong, even if it hurts me, I'd still do it because I can't bear the thought of losing you, and that scares me."

Klaus's lips brushed against Bucky's temple, a soft, almost tender gesture. "And you won't lose me, Schatz. I'll always be here. I'll always need you just as much as you need me."

Bucky nodded slightly, his forehead still pressed against Klaus's shoulder. "I'm scared of the way you look at me sometimes. Like you own me. Like I'm nothing without you. And maybe that's true, maybe I am nothing without you. But it terrifies me."

Klaus's hands moved to cup Bucky's face, lifting his head so that their eyes met. "You are everything to me, Bucky. You are mine, and I will always take care of you. Yes, I own you. But that means I will protect you, cherish you, and keep you safe from everything that scares you."

Bucky's eyes were filled with tears—a mixture of fear, love, gratitude, and resignation. "I don't know who I am anymore, Klaus. I don't know where you end and I begin."

Klaus's thumbs brushed away the tears that spilt down Bucky's cheeks. "You don't have to know, flower. All you need to know is that you are mine, and I am yours. We belong to each other, and nothing will ever change that. There is no you without me."

Bucky's hands slid up to rest over Klaus's heart, feeling the steady, reassuring beat beneath his palms. "You scare me, Klaus, because I love you. And I don't know how to stop."

Klaus's eyes darkened in primal hunger and then softened, his hands cradling Bucky's face gently. "You don't have to stop, flower. Loving me is the best thing you can do. It's what keeps us both safe, what keeps us both whole."

Bucky nodded, the weight of Klaus's words sinking deep into his mind. He leant into Klaus's touch, allowing himself to find solace in the man who had become his entire world. "I love you, Klaus," he whispered, the words a confession and a plea.

"And I love you, Bucky," Klaus replied, his voice a soothing balm. The poison had seeped so deeply into his boy's mind, and that deepened the hunger in Klaus' chest. "You are mine, and I will always take care of you. No matter what."

As Klaus's hands continued their gentle, possessive caresses, Bucky felt the last of his resistance melt away. The fears and doubts that had haunted him were overshadowed by the overwhelming need to belong to Klaus and to be safe in his embrace.

Klaus held Bucky close, his hands caressing his boy's back and shoulders, offering comfort and security. Bucky's breathing had steadied as he leant into the warmth of Klaus's presence, which enveloped him like a protective cocoon.

Klaus's hands moved up to cup Bucky's face, his fingers gentle yet firm. He tilted Bucky's head up, their eyes locking in an intense gaze. "You are mine, Bucky," Klaus whispered, his voice a possessive growl.

Bucky's eyes fluttered closed as Klaus leant in, capturing his lips in a deep, possessive kiss. The kiss was both a reassurance and a claim, a reminder of the bond that tied them together so deeply. Bucky melted into the kiss, his hands clutching at Klaus's shirt, seeking the comfort and security that only Klaus could provide.

Klaus's fingers threaded into Bucky's hair, tugging his head back to expose the vulnerable column of his neck. Bucky gasped softly, his eyes opening briefly before closing again, surrendering to the sensation. Klaus's lips trailed down from Bucky's jaw to his neck, leaving a trail of heated kisses that sent shivers down Bucky's spine.

As Klaus's mouth moved over his neck, Bucky felt the familiar tug of

teeth and lips marking his skin. Klaus's kisses grew more insistent and demanding as he left his mark on Bucky. Bucky sighed and moaned softly, the sounds of his pleasure filling the room. Klaus's hands tightened in his hair, holding him in place as he continued his possessive exploration.

Klaus's lips found the bruises that had already begun to fade, the marks left from the night he had wrapped his fingers around Bucky's neck and squeezed. The sight of the faint bruises ignited a dark satisfaction in Klaus, a reminder of his control and dominance. He pressed his lips against the bruises, feeling Bucky's pulse quicken beneath his mouth.

Bucky's breath hitched as Klaus's fingers tightened in his hair, the slight pull sending jolts of sensation through his body. Klaus's other hand moved to Bucky's waist, holding him steady as he continued to kiss and nip at his neck. The room was filled with the sounds of their shared breaths—the soft moans and sighs of pleasure escaping Bucky's lips.

"You belong to me," Klaus murmured against Bucky's skin, his voice a low, possessive growl. "Every mark on your body, every bruise, every scar, is a reminder of that."

Bucky's hands slid up Klaus's chest, resting over his heart as he leant into the touch. "Yes, Klaus," he whispered, his voice trembling with a mix of fear and desire. "I'm yours."

Klaus's lips curled into a satisfied smile against his boy's neck. He continued to leave marks, his teeth grazing the skin and leaving small, dark bruises in his wake. Bucky's body responded to each touch, his moans growing louder and his hands clutching at Klaus's shirt as if to anchor himself.

Klaus's fingers moved from Bucky's hair to his neck, tracing the outline of the bruises he had left before. He applied just enough pressure to remind Bucky of their presence, his thumb brushing over the tender skin. Bucky gasped, his eyes fluttering open to meet Klaus's intense gaze.

"Do you feel that, Bucky?" Klaus asked, his voice a low, intimate whisper. "Do you feel my mark on you?"

Bucky nodded, his breath coming in shallow, trembling gasps. "Yes, Klaus. I feel it."

Klaus's hand moved back to Bucky's waist, pulling him even closer. "Good," he said, his lips brushing against Bucky's ear. "Never forget who you belong to."

Bucky's body relaxed into Klaus's embrace, the tension that had gripped him earlier melting away under the possessive touch of his protector. The fear and anxiety that had plagued him were replaced by the overwhelming sensation of belonging, of being cared for and protected.

As Klaus continued to mark him, Bucky allowed himself to be lost in the moment, letting go of the fears that had haunted him. In Klaus's arms, he found a twisted sense of peace, a dark comfort that made the shadows of his past fade into the background.

For now, that was enough. Bucky let himself surrender to the pleasure, the possessive touch of Klaus, and the knowledge that he was safe in the arms of the man who owned him. He ground his hips down, seeking friction and Klaus welcomed the movement, spreading his legs wider to allow his boy to grind against him.

The intimacy between Bucky and Klaus was abruptly shattered by the sound of glass smashing downstairs. Bucky froze in Klaus's arms, his body going rigid as fear gripped him. The soft sighs and moans of pleasure were replaced by the harsh, ragged sound of Bucky's growing hyperventilation. All his fears came rushing back, overwhelming him in an instant.

Klaus growled—a deep, animalistic sound that Bucky had never heard before. The feral noise echoed in the room, vibrating through Bucky’s bones. Klaus's grip on Bucky tightened, his protective instincts surging to the forefront.

"Klaus..." Bucky trembled, clutching Klaus's shirt desperately. His eyes were wide with terror, and his mind was racing with visions of the horrors he had endured. His mind hadn't been playing games with him; there had truly been someone in the forest.

Klaus looked at him, his gaze softening momentarily with concern before darkening with fierce determination. "It's going to be okay, my boy," Klaus promised, his voice a low, reassuring growl. He kissed Bucky deeply, as if to transfer some of his own strength and resolve.

Without another word, Klaus picked Bucky up and carried him to the corner of the room furthest from the door. He set him down gently, his eyes never leaving Bucky’s face. “Stay here,” he commanded, his

tone brooking no argument.

Bucky nodded, his heart pounding in his chest. Klaus's calm yet commanding presence gave him a sliver of reassurance as his body shook in terror. He didn't want to be in the hands of the Germans. He didn't want their hands to tear him apart, defile his body, and leave it to rot. To be forgotten.

Klaus reached down under the bed and pulled out a large knife and a pistol. He checked the weapons with practiced efficiency, his movements swift and sure. The sight of Klaus armed and ready for battle both terrified and comforted Bucky. This was real, and it was happening whether he liked it or not.

"Klaus, be careful," Bucky whispered, his voice trembling.

Klaus turned to him, his eyes blazing with intensity. "I will be, Schatz. Stay hidden and quiet. I'll handle this."

Bucky nodded again, curling into the corner as small as he could make himself. He wrapped his arms around his knees, trying to control his breathing. The fear was nearly paralysing, but Klaus's presence and his promise of safety gave Bucky something to hold onto.

Klaus moved to the door, his body tense and alert. He paused for a moment, looking back at Bucky. "Remember, I'm just downstairs. No one will hurt you. I promise."

With that, Klaus slipped out of the room, moving with a silent, predatory grace. Bucky listened to the faint sounds of Klaus descending the stairs, his heart hammering in his chest. He strained to hear anything else—every creak and rustle in the house was amplified by his heightened senses, which only added to his growing panic.

Downstairs, Klaus moved with lethal precision, his eyes scanning the shadows for any sign of the intruder. The smash of glass had been a blatant intrusion, a challenge that Klaus was more than ready to meet. He had spent years honing his skills, and he was not about to let anyone threaten what was his.

As he reached the bottom of the stairs, Klaus's senses were on high alert. The darkness of the house was his ally, the shadows concealing his movements as he crept towards the source of the noise. His grip on the knife and pistol was steady, and his mind was focused on the task at hand.

In the harsh silence of the bedroom, Bucky tried to steady his breathing, his mind supplying him with every horrible scenario and memory it could conjure. He could hear the faintest sounds of Klaus moving downstairs, his protector hunting whatever threat had invaded their home. The minutes stretched on, each one feeling like an eternity as Bucky waited, his heart lodged in his throat.

Suddenly, a faint but distinct sound reached Bucky's ears—the soft pad of footsteps on the stairs, lighter and more cautious than Klaus's. His breath caught in his throat. This was not Klaus.

Downstairs, Klaus prowled through the shadows, his senses sharp. He heard the faint rustle of movement and the subtle creak of a floorboard. His grip tightened on the knife, ready to strike. He rounded a corner, his eyes scanning the darkness, seeking the source of the disturbance.

And then he saw him. A shadowy figure, moving with the silent precision of a trained soldier, was making his way up the stairs. Klaus's heart raced, a low growl emanating from deep within his chest. This was no ordinary intruder. This was someone trained, someone dangerous, and they were heading for his prized possession.

Klaus moved swiftly, his knife gleaming in the pale light as he advanced. But the intruder was quick, sidestepping Klaus's initial strike and countering with a swift, precise blow that knocked the knife from Klaus's hand. Klaus recovered quickly, drawing his pistol, but the intruder was already moving—a blur of motion in the darkness.

The two men clashed in a brutal dance of violence. Klaus aimed his pistol, firing off a shot that embedded itself in the wall as the intruder twisted out of the way. The fight was growing in its intensity, each move countered with ruthless efficiency from both parties. Klaus's mind raced as he blocked another blow, recognising the face of his opponent.

And then it hit him. "You," he snarled, the realisation dawning with a mix of rage and surprise.

"Yes," the intruder replied, his voice cold and determined. "And I'm here for Bucky."

Klaus's fury ignited, and his strikes became more aggressive. "You won't take him from me!" he roared, lunging forward. The intruder parried the attack, delivering a powerful kick that sent Klaus crashing into the wall.

Upstairs, Bucky's heart pounded as he listened to the sounds of struggle below. He could hear the grunts and thuds of combat, the clash of metal, and the sharp crack of gunfire. Fear surged through him, making his hands tremble and his breathing more difficult. He felt utterly alone, the dark room closing in around him, suffocating him with memories of past terrors. He lifted his hands and covered his ears, trying to block everything out.

In the hallway, Klaus and the intruder were locked in a deadly dance. Klaus's pistol discharged again, the bullet narrowly missing the intruder's head. The intruder countered with a swift, decisive blow, sending Klaus's pistol skittering across the floor. The fight was brutal, with each man fighting with the desperation of the same goal—to stop the other from reaching Bucky.

With a sudden, unpredictable move, the intruder gained the upper hand. A powerful strike sent Klaus crashing into the wall and down a few steps. Dazed, Klaus tried to recover, but the intruder was already disappearing around the corner, heading for Bucky.

"Flower!" Klaus shouted, his voice a roaring warning.

In the bedroom, Bucky's heart raced as he heard Klaus's shout. The footsteps were closer now, each one a drumbeat of impending confrontation. He pressed himself further into the corner, his body trembling.

The door creaked open, and a figure stepped inside. Bucky's breath caught in his throat as he looked up, his eyes wide with fear and confusion.

"Bucky," the intruder said softly, his voice a mix of relief and urgency.

Recognition flashed in Bucky's eyes, followed by a wave of emotion that threatened to overwhelm him.

"Buck?"

Chapter 28: A Heart Divided

Chapter Notes

> Hey everyone!
>
> Thank you so much for your patience. I'm so sorry this update took a while. I have some exciting news—I got accepted to start the academy for my new job! This past week has been hectic with moving all my stuff to my new house. I even bought a laptop so I could write during the hour-and-a-half trips to the new place and back.
>
> I hope you all enjoy this chapter, and I can't wait to hear your thoughts!
>
> Much love and appreciation, as always!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The door creaked open, and a shadowy figure stepped inside. Bucky's breath caught in his throat as he looked up, his eyes wide with fear and confusion. The dim light from the hallway cast an eerie glow, making it difficult to discern friend from foe.

"Bucky," the intruder said softly, his voice a mix of relief and urgency.

Recognition flashed in Bucky's eyes, followed by a wave of emotion that threatened to overwhelm him.

"Buck?" He whispered, his voice trembling with disbelief.

"Yeah, it's me," Buck replied, stepping closer, his eyes scanning Bucky for any sign of injury and seeing so many. "I've come to take you home." Buck spoke softly, his voice thick with emotion, eyes stinging with unshed tears.

Bucky was so close, just a few metres away, but at the same time, it felt as if he were miles away. The man before him was so different from the Bucky he had seen all those months ago. The strong, lively spirit that once defined Bucky seemed buried under layers of pain and suffering.

The sight before Buck was almost too much to bear. Bucky's body bore the physical marks of his time with the General—bruises and cuts

stark against his pale skin—but it was the haunted look in his eyes that tore at Buck's heart the most, for the man he loved. The Bucky he remembered was vibrant, full of life and fire, always ready with a laugh or a smile. This Bucky, however, was a shadow of that person, his spirit crushed by whatever had happened during his time with the monster of a man.

Each step Buck took towards him felt like crossing an unpredicatable chasm. He could see the wariness in Bucky's eyes, the way he flinched at every small sound, and the way his body tensed as if expecting another blow. The lively man who once faced the world with unbreakable confidence was now a fragile figure, his strength sapped by the cruelty he had endured.

Buck's heart ached with guilt and pain. He wanted to reach out, to close the distance between them, but he feared that even the smallest touch might cause Bucky more pain. "Bucky," he whispered, his voice breaking. "I'm so sorry. I should have been there for you."

Bucky's eyes flickered with recognition and deep, aching hurt. The distance between them was more than physical. It was a gulf carved by months of suffering and constant broken trust. Buck felt a profound sense of helplessness, knowing that the journey to heal these wounds would be long and fraught with challenge after challenge once he got Bucky out of here.

Bucky's heart pounded in his chest, the battling emotions tearing him apart. He didn't know where Klaus was, and now Buck was here. But Buck thought he was dirty and ruined and hated him now—he had to be here to hurt him. Right? Fear and confusion gripped him, making it hard to think, so he curled up tighter to protect himself. The psychological damage inflicted by Klaus's lies twisted in his mind, warping his perception of reality and making it nearly impossible to distinguish friend from foe if they weren't Klaus.

Klaus had been relentless in his manipulation, feeding Bucky falsehoods about Buck, eroding his trust and self-worth. "Buck abandoned you because he thinks you're worthless," Klaus would whisper in Bucky's ear during those dark nights. "He hates you for what you've become. He'll never want you again." The words had burrowed deep, festering and spreading like poison through Bucky's mind.

Now, faced with Buck's presence only mere metres away, those lies screamed louder than ever. Bucky's mind was warring with itself,

every rational thought drowned out by the insidious whispers of doubt and fear that Klaus had implanted. The man he once trusted and loved above all others now seemed like a potential threat, his intentions unclear and suspect. Buck's proximity felt suffocating, his familiar face a haunting reminder of all the love and safety that Bucky felt he no longer deserved.

The fear was paralyzing. Bucky's body trembled uncontrollably, his breath coming in ragged gasps as he struggled to reconcile the conflicting emotions. He wanted to believe Buck was there to save him, to protect him as he once had, but the damage Klaus had done was too profound and deeply intergrated in his mind for him to believe otherwise. The lies had taken root, growing into a thorny barrier that separated Bucky from the truth.

Buck took another step closer, his hand reaching out. "Bucky, come with me, please, baby," he urged, his voice gentle but insistent, his eyes flickering between Bucky and the door.

Bucky flinched, holding out his hand to stop Buck's approach and tucking his face away, his body trembling with terror. "Please," Bucky whispered, his voice cracking. "Don't hurt me. I can't take it anymore." He curled up tighter, his body a tight ball of tension and pain, trying to make himself as small and unnoticeable as possible.

Buck flinched at Bucky's words, a pained noise escaping his lips. The sight of Bucky, so scared and so broken, tore at his heart. He knew they didn't have much time until Klaus arrived. "Bucky, I would never hurt you," he said softly, desperation creeping into his voice. "I'm here to save you. Please, come with me. We're running out of time."

His heart broke at the sight of Bucky's terror. Bucky had never once flinched from Buck, and seeing him do so now was shattering his heart into a million pieces. Deep down, he knew it wasn't Bucky's fault, but it still felt like a hot blade slicing through his heart. He could see the deep psychological scars Klaus had left behind and the way the lies had twisted Bucky's perception of himself and the world. The strong, confident man Buck once knew was hidden beneath layers of trauma and mistrust, replaced by someone who flinched at shadows and recoiled from touch.

"Bucky," Buck said softly, taking another careful step forward, his voice shaking under the guilt and pain of seeing the man he loved so deeply fear his touch. "I'm here to help you. I would never hurt you. I love you, Bucky. I've always loved you. And I'll do anything to keep

you safe. I promised you all those months ago at the gate that I'd never stop until I found you and got you home safe."

But Bucky couldn't hear him through the cacophony of fear and doubt that clouded his mind. The psychological damage Klaus had inflicted was a prison—each lie that had been fed to him was a bar that kept Bucky locked in a state of perpetual terror. It would take time and patience to undo the harm and rebuild the trust that had been shattered.

Just then, a crashing sound echoed through the house, followed by heavy, pounding footsteps. Buck's eyes widened, knowing they had run out of time. "Bucky, we have to go, now!" he insisted, his voice growing more urgent.

But Bucky was paralysed with fear, his mind a storm of conflicting emotions. He couldn't process what was happening—that Buck was actually here in front of him. The room started spinning around him as he tried to make sense of it all, and he started to gasp for air, his lungs siezing in his chest.

"Bucky!" Klaus's voice boomed from the hallway, filled with rage and possessiveness. The sound of his voice snapped Bucky out of his daze, his eyes darting towards the door in terror.

Klaus was going to be so angry. What if he was mad at him? What if this was his fault? Bucky thought.

Buck reached for Bucky again, but before he could make contact, the door slammed open with a thunderous crash.

Klaus stormed into the room, his eyes first landing on a terrified Bucky, curled up and trembling. His gaze then flicked to Buck, and his face contorted with fury, his eyes darkening until they were almost black. The difference in how he looked at Bucky and Buck was evident —where his gaze softened momentarily with Bucky, it hardened into absolute hatred with Buck.

"You will not take him from me!" Klaus roared, his voice reverberating off the walls. His eyes blazed with a maniacal gleam, and his lips curled into a snarl. His powerful frame loomed threateningly, every muscle taut with a terrifying blend of aggression and deranged possessiveness.

The sight of Klaus brought a twisted cocktail of fear and a strange, misguided sense of security to Bucky. He had been conditioned to see

Klaus as his protector, despite the pain and manipulation. But now, seeing the raw fury directed at Buck, Bucky's heart pounded even harder, and his confusion grew.

Buck positioned himself protectively in front of Bucky, his own eyes narrowing with hatred. "I won't let you hurt him anymore. This ends now."

Klaus's eyes flashed with anger and something darker—something unstable and deranged. "You think you can just walk in here and undo everything I've done? He's mine! You have no right to him!"

The room crackled with tension, and the air thickened with the impending clash. Buck's heart ached for Bucky, caught in the crossfire of this brutal struggle. He knew that Klaus's grip on Bucky was not just physical but deeply psychological—a twisted hold that would take time to break and heal.

Klaus's eyes burned with a deep, primal anger. "He is mine," he hissed again, taking a threatening step forward. "You have no idea what you're dealing with. I'll tear you limb from limb, American."

Bucky's body trembled, caught between the two men. The room seemed to close in around him, the intensity of the confrontation suffocating. He felt trapped, his mind unable to process the scene unfolding before him.

"Bucky," Buck said softly, glancing over his shoulder, his voice filled with urgency. "You need to leave. Now."

But Bucky couldn't move, his fear rooting him to the spot. His gaze flicked between Klaus and Buck, his heart breaking as he realised the depth of the choice he was being forced to make by the two men in front of him.

"Klaus, please, I'm scared." Bucky whimpered, his voice barely audible.

Klaus's gaze softened momentarily as he looked at Bucky, but his fury returned when he looked back at Buck. "You will not take him from me," he repeated, his voice a deadly growl.

In a sudden, unexpected explosive move, Klaus lunged at Buck, his powerful frame barrelling forward with deadly intention and blood lust in his eyes. Buck braced himself, positioning Bucky behind him protectively with his body. "Stay back, Klaus!" he shouted, his voice

filled with anger. "You won't hurt him anymore!"

Klaus's growl was a feral sound as he closed the distance, swinging a heavy fist aimed at Buck's head. Buck ducked, the punch whizzing past his ear, and countered with a sharp jab to Klaus's ribs. The impact was solid, but Klaus barely flinched, his anger driving him to barely feel it.

They collided again, their bodies slamming into walls and furniture, the room becoming a battleground. Buck grabbed a nearby lamp, swinging it towards Klaus's head, but Klaus caught it mid-swing and ripped it from Buck's hands, smashing it to the ground.

Klaus grabbed Buck by the throat, lifting him off his feet and slamming him into a bookshelf. Buck gasped for air, his vision blurring as he struggled against Klaus's iron grip as the books tumbled to the floor around him. Summoning all his strength, Buck kicked out, catching Klaus in the knee and causing him to stagger backwards.

Buck fell to the ground, coughing and gasping for breath. He scrambled to his feet, just as Klaus recovered and charged at him again. Buck sidestepped, grabbing a chair and shoving it into Klaus's path. The chair shattered as Klaus ploughed through it, but it gave Buck a moment's reprieve to catch his breath.

Bucky watched in horror, his heart shattering as the two people he cared for most fought with such savagery. It was obvious this was going to be a fight to the death. "Klaus! Buck! Stop!" he cried out, his voice breaking with desperation. But his plea went unheard as the fight raged on.

Suddenly, the reality of the violence and the danger became too much. Bucky's survival instincts kicked in, and he bolted from the room, terror propelling him forward. He fled down the hallway and burst through the door to the stairs, his footsteps echoing loudly in the stillness of the night.

"Bucky, wait!" Buck shouted, abandoning the fight momentarily to chase after him. He couldn’t let Bucky run off into danger, not in his state. He bolted down the stairs after him, clutching his opened knife wound in pain, his heart pounding with fear and adrenaline.

Klaus pursued them both, hot on Buck’s heels as he barrelled down the hallway. "I’m going to kill you!" he roared, his voice echoing off the walls as he chased them down the stairs.

Bucky's breath came in ragged gasps as he stumbled down the staircase, his mind overcome by fear and panic. He could hear Buck's and Klaus's footsteps behind him. The sound was a constant reminder of the danger he was in, and his heart was beating wildly, blood roaring in his ears.

He had to get away.

Reaching the bottom of the stairs, Bucky turned into the foyer, but his pace faltered when he saw more figures outside in the distance. The terror and confusion threatened to squeeze his lungs dry. He skidded to a halt, his eyes wide with fear, unsure of where to go next. If there were people out there, then he wouldn't cross that threshold.

Buck was right behind him, his instincts screaming at him to protect Bucky at all costs. He reached out, trying to catch Bucky's arm. "Bucky, we have to keep moving!" he urged, his voice desperate and pained.

But before he could grab Bucky, Klaus barrelled into Buck from behind, slamming him into the wall with bone-jarring force. Buck grunted in pain, the impact knocking the wind out of him. He slid down the wall, struggling to regain his breath.

Bucky stopped in his tracks, his eyes darting between Klaus and Buck. His heart pounded in his chest, the fear and panic threatening to consume him completely. He couldn't leave Buck behind, not after everything they had been through. But he couldn't leave Klaus either. He loved him.

Klaus turned his attention back to Bucky, his eyes blazing with a dangerous mix of rage and possessiveness. "You're mine, Bucky. You'll always be mine," he growled, advancing on him.

Bucky's body trembled, but he forced himself to stay where he was, his hand trembling as he held it out to Klaus to take. "Klaus, please," he begged, his voice breaking. "This isn't the way. You're hurting everyone, including yourself. Please, I love you."

Klaus hesitated, his eyes flickering with conflicting emotions. For a brief moment, it seemed as if he might relent. But then his face twisted with anger again, his hands balling into fists as his eyes flickered between Buck and Bucky.

"No one takes you away from me, flower," Klaus snarled, his voice low and dangerous. He took another step forward, his intent clear. He was

going to kill Buck.

Summoning the last of his strength, Buck pushed himself to his feet, positioning himself between Klaus and Bucky. "You're not taking him, Klaus," Buck said, his voice firm despite the pain coursing through his body as he clutched his side. "This ends now."

Bucky stood frozen, his heart torn between the two men who had defined so much of his life. He knew that whatever happened next, nothing would ever be the same. And he didn't know if he could handle that.

Buck and Klaus stared each other down, the hatred and coldness in their eyes a testament to the lengths they were willing to go. The final confrontation was upon them, and there would be no turning back.

Bucky could only watch in helpless terror as the two men he cared about most prepared to destroy each other. His mind raced, desperately searching for a way to end the madness. But before he could think of anything, the battle between the two men began anew, with savage ferocity.

Klaus swung wildly, his rage making his movements erratic but powerful. Buck dodged and weaved, using Klaus's anger against him, landing quick, precise blows that chipped away at Klaus's strength and endurance.

With a desperate lunge, Klaus grabbed Buck by the arm and threw him across the room. Buck crashed into a table, the wood splintering under his weight. Klaus advanced, his eyes blazing with fury, ready to deliver a finishing blow.

Buck, dazed and battered, struggled to his feet, with blood dripping down the side of his face. He looked at Bucky, their eyes locking for a brief, heart-wrenching moment. "Bucky, please, trust me," Buck pleaded, his voice barely more than a whisper. "I'm here to save you, Bucky. Please believe me. I love you so goddamn much."

Bucky's heart ached with those words. He didn't know what to believe. He didn't know what to do, torn between the man who had protected him and the man who had once loved him. "I… I can't…" he whispered, his voice breaking.

Klaus's eyes darkened with rage. "He doesn't want you. He's mine," he hissed, lunging at Buck again. The two men clashed once more, their struggle growing even more brutal and bloody.

Klaus grabbed a shard of broken glass from the shattered vase that had smashed during Buck's fall and slashed at Buck, cutting a deep gash across his forearm. Buck grit his teeth against the pain, countering with a punch to Klaus's jaw that sent him reeling, with blood pouring from his split lip.

Buck managed to get Klaus into a headlock, his arm constricting around Klaus's throat. Klaus thrashed wildly, driving his elbow into Buck's stab wound repeatedly until Buck was forced to release him. Klaus turned, his eyes blazing with fury, and tackled Buck to the ground. They rolled across the floor, grappling for the upper hand, each blow more vicious than the last.

Buck landed a solid punch to Klaus's nose, feeling the bone crack beneath his knuckles. Klaus roared in pain, blood streaming down his face, but he didn't stop. He grabbed Buck by the hair, slamming his head into the floor with brutal force. Buck's vision blurred, stars exploding behind his eyes, but he refused to give up.

Klaus's eyes gleamed with a psychopathic intensity as he leant in close, his breath hot against Buck's ear. With a sadistic grin, Klaus dug his fingers into the stab wound in Buck's side, twisting and pressing down with cruel precision. Buck screamed in agony, the pain searing through his body like a white-hot blade.

"You think you can take him from me?" Klaus hissed, his voice dripping with venom. "He's mine. He'll always be mine."

Buck's body convulsed with the pain, his strength waning as he struggled to break free. He could feel the blood seeping from his wound—Klaus's fingers digging deeper into his side. Desperation fueled his movements as he thrashed beneath Klaus, trying to dislodge him.

Gathering every ounce of strength he had left, Buck bucked his hips and twisted his body, managing to throw Klaus off balance. Klaus stumbled, momentarily losing his grip, and Buck seized the opportunity. He rolled away, clutching his side, and tried to push himself up, his breaths coming in ragged gasps.

Klaus recovered quickly, his face sliding into a mask of fury and madness. He lunged at Buck again, but this time, Buck was ready. He met Klaus head-on, their bodies colliding with a bone-jarring impact. They crashed to the floor once more, each fighting with a renewed sense of fire.

They rolled across the floor, a tangle of limbs and blood. Buck managed to get his hands on a piece of broken glass, slashing at Klaus's arm and leaving a deep, jagged cut. Klaus roared in pain, his grip on Buck tightening as he fought through the agony. He grabbed Buck's wrist, twisting it until the glass fell from his grasp, and pinned him to the ground.

Bucky watched in terror, tears streaming down his face. "Please, stop!" he cried, his voice breaking. "You're going to kill each other!"

But neither man listened. The room was filled with the sounds of their struggle—the grunts of exertion and the sickening thud of flesh hitting flesh. Blood smeared the walls and floor, painting the room with their hatred for each other.

Klaus landed a brutal punch to Buck's stomach, doubling him over. He grabbed Buck by the throat, lifting him off the ground and slamming him into the wall. Buck gasped for air, his hands clawing at Klaus's iron grip, but he couldn't break free. Klaus's eyes were wild, filled with a murderous rage.

"I told you, he's mine!" Klaus snarled, his voice a low, dangerous growl. He tightened his grip on Buck's throat, ready to crush the life out of him.

Desperate, Buck lashed out with a knee to Klaus's groin. Klaus grunted in pain, his grip loosening just enough for Buck to slip free. Buck staggered back, gasping for breath, his vision swimming.

The room was a war zone, a mess of shattered furniture and blood-stained walls. Buck and Klaus were locked in a brutal struggle, their bodies colliding with raw, unadulterated fury. Every punch and every kick was fueled by the need to protect Bucky and to possess him.

Buck, battered and bruised, managed to seize a shard of glass from the wreckage. With a final, desperate lunge, he drove the jagged piece deep into Klaus's chest. The world seemed to stop for a moment as the finality of the act settled in. Klaus's eyes widened in shock and pain, his hand instinctively pulling out the large shard of glass protruding from his chest.

Klaus stumbled, crashing to his knees before falling backwards onto the floor with blood dripping out of the side of his mouth.

Bucky's scream pierced the air, a sound of pure terror and heartbreak. The sight of Klaus, the man he loved, who had been his protector, now

lying on the ground, bleeding and broken, shattered the paralysis that had held him in place.

In an instant, Bucky was moving, driven by fear and the desperation to get to Klaus's side.

"Buck, no!" he screamed, barrelling into Buck with all his strength. The force of the impact sent Buck sprawling backwards, his balance lost in the surprise attack. He hit the floor hard, and the wind was knocked out of him.

Bucky didn't stop to check on Buck. He scrambled across the broken glass, ignoring the sharp pain as it cut into his hands and knees. His only focus was Klaus, who lay on the floor, blood pooling around him. Klaus's breaths were ragged, a wet, gurgling sound accompanying each exhale as he clutched his chest.

"Klaus, stay with me!" Bucky cried, his voice trembling. He reached out, his hands shaking as he tried to apply pressure to the wound, desperate to stem the flow of blood. "Don't leave me. Please don't leave me."

Klaus's eyes fluttered open, pain and regret reflected in them. He reached up weakly, his bloodstained hand covering Bucky's cheek. "I'm… sorry, my Schatz," he managed to choke out, his voice barely more than a whisper, blood bubbling from his mouth.

Tears streamed down Bucky's face as he tried to hold Klaus together, his heart breaking with every second that passed. "I don't know how to live without you," he sobbed, clutching Klaus's hand. "Please stay with me. I need you."

Klaus's grip on Bucky's cheek weakened, his hand slipping away as his life ebbed out of him slowly. He blinked, the light in his eyes fading. But in his final moments, a dark, final need flickered through him. "If I can't have you, then neither can he," Klaus gurgled, reaching for a shard of glass.

With whatever strength he had left in him, Klaus lifted the shard and went to slam it into Bucky's throat.

Before he could make contact, the life slipped out of Klaus, and his arm with the glass fell against the floor.

Bucky froze, gasping. He slowly looked down to where Klaus had tried to stab him. He blinked in confusion, his mind struggling to process

what had just happened.

Buck screamed in terror, his voice echoing through the room. “Bucky!”

But Bucky was frozen, his eyes locked on Klaus’s lifeless body and the shard of glass that had been meant to kill him. He looked between Klaus and the glass, his mind repeating a single, haunting question.

Why?

Why?

Why?

These were the only thoughts running through his head. The man who had once protected and loved him had, in his final moments, tried to take his life. The betrayal cut deeper than any wound, leaving Bucky feeling hollow and lost.

Buck crawled over to Bucky, his own pain and fear momentarily forgotten. He placed a gentle hand on Bucky’s shoulder, his voice trembling. “Bucky, look at me. You’re safe now. He’s gone.”

Bucky turned his head slowly, his eyes filled with a mix of sorrow and disbelief. “Why, Buck? Why did he do this?”

“I don’t know,” Buck whispered, pulling Bucky into his arms. “But I’m here now. We’ll get through this together.”

They stayed in that embrace for what felt like an eternity, the room eerily silent except for their laboured breaths. Bucky’s mind was a whirlwind of emotions, unable to comprehend the recent events. Klaus, the man who had once been a monster and then his sanctuary, had turned into that monster again in his final moments. The betrayal was weighed heavy on his chest, making it hard to breathe.

Buck felt Bucky’s body tremble with sobs, each one tearing through him like a blade. He tightened his grip, trying to anchor Bucky in the present and offer whatever comfort he could. “I’m here, Bucky. I’m not going anywhere.”

Bucky's mind was a wildfire of anger, betrayal, and overwhelming grief. The sight of Klaus lying there—the man who had once been his protector, now a lifeless body on the floor—shattered something deep inside him. All the promises Klaus had made, the assurances of safety

and love, now lay in ruins around him, just like the man who had spoken them.

With a cry of anguish, Bucky broke free from Buck's arms and reached for the shard of glass Klaus had tried to kill him with. His hands trembled with fury as he gripped the jagged piece. His heart pounded in his chest—each beat a reminder of the pain and betrayal he felt from the man he loved. Klaus had twisted his mind, turned his love into something dark and unrecognisable, and ultimately tried to end his life.

His vision was blurred with tears. Bucky screamed and plunged the glass into Klaus's chest. "How could you leave me?" he roared, the first stab driven by pure heartbreak. "How could you do this to me?" The second thrust was fueled by the pain of betrayal. "You broke me!" he yelled, the glass cutting deep, blood splattering with each impact.

"You promised you'd never leave!" Another stab, each one more forceful and desperate than the last. "You made me love you! You twisted everything! And then you left me here!" His voice broke with each word, the intensity of his emotions pouring out through his actions.

"How could you try to kill me?" he sobbed, the glass tearing through flesh again and again. "You said you'd keep me safe!" Each accusation was a raw, bleeding wound, his soul laid bare in the violent act. "You promised!" he screamed, his voice hoarse with the effort, the tears blinding him.

"You promised," he whispered, the ferocity ebbing, replaced by a crushing sense of loss. "You promised you'd never leave me." He stabbed again, but his strength was waning and his movements were growing weaker. "You made me believe you loved me," he gasped, his voice barely audible now, choked with sobs.

"You broke your promise," he said, the last thrust of the glass lacking the fury of the previous ones. His strength gave out, and he collapsed beside Klaus's mutilated body, the glass shard falling from his grasp.

Bucky lay there, his grief and rage too much to bear. His body convulsed with sobs, the emotional and physical exhaustion overwhelming him. The man who had once been his tormentor had become his anchor, leaving him adrift in a sea of pain.

Buck watched in stunned silence, his heart aching for Bucky. He wanted to reach out to comfort him, but he knew Bucky needed this

moment to release his pain. Tears streamed down Buck’s face as he witnessed Bucky’s complete and utter collapse at the death of a monster.

"I loved you," Bucky whispered through his sobs, his voice breaking. "How could you do this to me? How could you turn into this? Why?" The questions hung in the air, unanswered, as the reality of Klaus's actions settled over him.

The memories of their time together flooded back—Klaus's gentle touch, his comforting words, the feeling of safety and love that had once been so real but were also stained with Klaus's cruelty, his manipulation, and his ultimate betrayal.

Bucky’s sobs grew louder, his body shaking with the force of his emotions. He had given Klaus his heart, his trust, and his everything, and in return, Klaus had left him. The man he had loved was gone.

Buck couldn’t bear to see Bucky like this. Slowly, he moved closer, his hand trembling as he reached out to touch Bucky's shoulder. "Bucky," he whispered, his voice filled with pain and love. "I’m here. You’re not alone."

Bucky turned his tear-streaked face towards Buck, his eyes filled with an ocean of grief. "He promised," he said again, his voice barely more than a broken whisper. "He promised he’d never leave me."

"I know," Buck replied softly, his own tears falling freely. "But I’m here now. I won’t leave you. We’ll get through this together."

Bucky's sobs began to quiet, the raw intensity of his emotions slowly giving way to exhaustion. He leant into Buck, allowing himself to be held, to be comforted, even if just for a moment.

Chapter End Notes

> Thank you so much for reading this chapter!! I hope you enjoyed it as much as I enjoyed writing it! Your support and enthusiasm mean the world to me, and it keeps me inspired to continue this journey with you all. I can't thank you all enough for sticking around with me for as long as you have!
>
> I can't wait to hear your thoughts on this chapter, so please feel free to leave a comment and let me know what you think. Your feedback is incredibly valuable to me.

Stay tuned for the next update, and thank you again for being such amazing readers!

Much love and appreciation, as always! □□

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